

Gov't Exhibit E

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2013
Coaching Program

OneTaste Philosophy

POWERED BY ONETASTE

Table of Contents

- Section 1: Introduction to OneTaste Philosophy
- Section 2: Man/Woman Dynamics and the State of Orgasm
- Section 3: Power, Orgasm, and Surrender
- Section 4: Pleasure, Enjoyment, and Flow
- Section 5: The Rules of Play
- Section 6: Levels of Desire
- Section 7: Communication and Metamessages
- Section 8: Bringing Out the Beast
- Section 9: Love
- Section 10: The Eight Stages of Orgasm
- Section 11: Relationship by Design
- Section 12: Trauma
- Section 13: Generative Coaching

Section 1: Introduction to OneTaste Philosophy

The cultural dialogue about love, sex, relationships, and man/woman dynamics is sorely lacking in its consideration of the adhesive that binds all of those things together: orgasm. From learning about the science of human connection to studying (and perfecting) the technology of OM we have gone in a slightly less orthodox direction. We at OneTaste have connected the dots between what the clinical set call “hypoactive sexual desire disorder” (the epidemic of burnout that seems to be leaving women overextended and drowning their sorrows over pints of ice cream), the many crossed wires which plague man-woman dynamics, and the cure for all of the above, which has the power to pull us out of bad sex lives and a generally listless state: orgasm.

Instead of viewing orgasm as some kind of unicorn (a highly elusive object that we all want but that few of us really get to have), let’s first of all redefine the dictionary term altogether. Orgasm is not something that happens; it’s something we innately are. Orgasm expands our capacity for connection, so that in accessing it, we can kill two birds with one stone, simultaneously eliminating the western woman’s mantra, “I eat too much, I drink too much, I give too much and work too hard and still I can’t fill this hole,” and the western man’s mantra, “I have no idea how to please her.”

And here’s the kicker: the thing we want when we speak of the mysterious experience of connection is actually an accessible and repeatable occurrence we needn’t feel in mere passing moments (like when we’re having great sex or are in the throes of new love) but that we can actually live and thrive within at all times.

Here are some of the fundamental beliefs that inform this perspective:

- Orgasm and climax are NOT the same thing, contrary to popular knowledge.
- Orgasm is a state of being that sharpens our attention, relaxes our bodies, and expands our field of sensation so much that climax (what we typically view as orgasm) pales in comparison.
- Orgasm allows us to access our desire, magnetize what we want, and connect to each other.
- We already know meditation’s positive effects on the mind and body. Put orgasm and meditation together and you’re launched into a whole new stratosphere, one in which your focus, power, sexual enjoyment, and ability to connect increase exponentially.
- Orgasm strengthens the area of our brain devoted to feelings and empathy, which can be the antidote to the kinds of destructive conflicts everyone from politicians to people in dead-end marriages have been mulling over for millennia.
- Orgasm is the great leveler, because it affects people regardless of status, ethnicity, and other seemingly insurmountable differences. Hence, OM is gaining traction and starting conversations everywhere: among couples across the world, Burning Man diehards, orthodox Hasidic communities, and world-class science labs.

What the Internet did for virtual connection, orgasm will do for human connection. It expands our capacity to feel others, creating a global limbic network, where humans are routers. But the potential for orgasm as an agent of transformation is hampered by our current mindset. With not enough hours in the day, the tagline for this era is efficiency. We need it faster, better, and bigger not if we are going to get ahead, but simply if we are going to stay afloat. Everything from medicine to lovemaking needs to be fast, requiring as little attention as possible. What are we saving all of this time for? Apparently, in order to spend more of it on the Internet, which now consumes approximately 13 hours a week. Our priorities in other areas are similarly skewed: the average American will spend up to a year of her life looking for lost objects, and the average business executive will spend up to 68 hours a year being put on hold. And the average amount of time that we dedicate to sex per week is—drum roll, please—about 30 minutes.

We are caught in the “rat race,” but as Lily Tomlin points out: “The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you’re still a rat.” As you will learn in your own work with clients, many people do not discover this until they finally have “everything” except for the ability to enjoy it.

As even the monks of traditional Zen Buddhism know, the cultivation of the capacity for enjoyment takes time. You cannot download mastery or learn it from audio books—it requires an investment. The benefit is that the dividends continue to come in. Having developed a capacity for enjoyment, you have it irrespective of circumstances. Circumstantial pleasure, on the other hand, requires constant upkeep, and we continually find ourselves wheel-spinning in the mud of our own anxiety. We continue to do the same thing and expect different results, believing that happiness is in the conditions rather than an intrinsic quality we can metabolize within our own system.

It is for this reason that we cannot allow ourselves to hit bottom. Indeed, hitting bottom is an appropriate metaphor, as Carl Honore points out in his book *In Praise of Slowness*, in which he refers to himself as a recovering “speedaholic” who hit his bottom when he began reading one-minute bedtime stories to his two-year-old son in order to save time. The absurdity of this practice dramatized how he, like most of the world, was caught up in a culture that valorized speed, which probably began with the Industrial Revolution, was spurred by urbanization, and increased dramatically with 20th-century advances in technology. The author explores, in convincing and skillful prose, a quiet revolution known as “the slow movement,” which is attempting to integrate the advances of the Information Age into a lifestyle that is marked by an “inner slowness” that gives more depth to relationships with others and with oneself.

I see on a daily basis the results of people not allowing themselves basic human pleasures because they don’t have the time or energy, or they simply don’t know how. I see it because I am the woman they call. I am the woman they call when their relationship is falling apart, when she just can’t let him touch her anymore, or when he has tried everything and still can’t figure out what she wants.

And it's my job to break the bad news, to tell them what they've always feared: The cure for our hunger is to learn how to feed ourselves. The key lies in stopping the excuses, which includes finding the time for sex, admitting that sexual gratification matters, and converting all that unused, pent-up energy into orgasm. And that there is no way that you can just avoid it, no way that everything is going to be okay if you sweep sex under the rug. This is the cornerstone of our philosophy: **Orgasm is fundamental; it's fundamental to your life, it's fundamental to your power and fulfillment, and it's fundamental to your relationships and ability to communicate and stay connected with others.**

Section 2: Man/Woman Dynamics and the State of Orgasm

I contend that we are living in a state of imbalance in which men's power is inflated and women's power is diminished; that men have powerless strength and women have powered weakness and helplessness. This short-circuits our access to orgasm.

Women are addicted to victimhood. We complain of powerlessness and broadcast our brokenness. We are unaware that we are—understandably—opting for victimhood as the safer alternative to the persecution that we know we would receive as the powerful orgasmic beings we are capable of being.

And men are addicted to a power that they don't actually have. What's more, they seldom realize that they're doing everything they can to avoid the humiliation that will necessarily come as the power dynamic between men and women shifts back into balance.

For a woman who chooses the vastly more treacherous route of being as powerful as she is, what she gains along the way—the effects of this method, if you will—is the backbone that is required to wield her power properly. This backbone demarcates her path from Broken-Winged Bird to Queen. What a man gains on the path of realigning with his power is actual confidence, in place of the bravado and control that will get unceremoniously stripped from him in the process—a kind of unshakable rightness that is never threatened, that is never anything other than humble, and that is a necessary prerequisite to stepping into right relationship with a turned-on woman. But in order to find and cultivate and harness our orgasm, we—men and women—need each other. We are the catalysts to our own awakening.

What is heartbreaking to me is that in my work, I see scared, guilt-ridden, nice women who have absolutely no faith, no understanding of what a man is capable of, who keep all of their power and passion locked away behind a façade of goodness, not because they are actually good but because they believe that their man is incapable of handling their “badness.”

It is for this reason that modern men have become what I call Teacup Men, a term adopted from the concept of *Teacup Children* in Lori Gottlieb's seminal article, “*How to Land Your Kid in Therapy*.” Gottlieb began to notice an overarching ennui, a chronic and free-floating anxiety in children who were raised in loving families. Their parents, with the ostensible desire to make their children's lives easier, adopted an attitude of praise and love (which sounds healthy, right?). The problem began when this praise and love were applied to all behavior in the child, irrespective of whether or not the child was actually doing anything. It was a one-size-fits-all style of parenting that lacked something essential in guiding a child to become truly well balanced and healthy: asking more of the child than they think they are capable of and seeing them through their

difficulties without praise or criticism, but with the essential ingredient of well-placed attention.

In lieu of the attention that two overwhelmed, ill-equipped, working parents could provide, they offered sugar-coated praise, a tactic that was akin to offering a boatload of dessert to a child to keep them appeased rather than taking the time to cook nourishing meals. Gottlieb's observation was that such parenting results in children's weak and fragile, albeit inflated, egos. Beneath the children's false bravado and narcissism, they suffer from a paralyzing fear of taking risks and receiving nuanced criticism. In other words, these children are entitled but incapable of doing the work to feel that they deserve praise—they are unable to “metabolize” their lives.

The parents were understandably attempting to undo the therapy-inducing actions of the prior generation—that is, setting unreasonably high expectations without the incentive of praise. But rather than adding in the much-needed element of loving attention, the parents swung the pendulum to the other side and offered the same formula, with the opposite content. They did not realize that the problem was the formula itself.

And this is where we find a nation of children, who grow up to be adults who are, in Thomas L. Friedman's words, stuffed and starving. This is the same as getting stuck in the realm of pleasure rather than graduating to genuine enjoyment, which we will discuss later. Lori Gottlieb writes, “When ego-boosting parents exclaim ‘Great job!’ not just the first time a young child puts on his shoes but every single morning he does this, the child learns to feel that everything he does is special.”

I would assert that the adult equivalent is occurring between men and women today. Women have been conditioned into a state of learned helplessness in communicating what we wanted, and concluded that men were simply incapable of ever providing what we needed, creating within them a complementary learned helplessness of action. And so we became resentful martyrs, placators, and people-pleasers in the bedroom. We faked orgasm or withdrew, and in the emotional arena we tried to be as good and as low-maintenance as possible. But truly, what we wanted was to be penetrated, deeply seen, heard, and felt; however, the environment we created resulted in a generation of emasculated men, which only confirmed our initial hypothesis.

Our solution to our mothers' symptoms, that of feeling like victims, has been to “handle everything.” It has hit such a crescendo, that former surgeon general, Jocelyn Elders, suggested that women's inability to experience pleasure needed to be a “national conversation.”

Both men and women are essentially still adolescents in the arena of connection. We do not have a solid taproot—and this makes us reactive rather than responsive. We do not have a steadying perspective with feedback loops, methods, and practices to set high standards and meet them.

The only way out, the only way to slice through the Gordian knot, is to develop attention in all the gradients that occur in relationship, from the subtle to the gross, so that we can meet each other head on, intuit the right response, and have the power to act on what we know.

We need a rigorous practice for sex, love, and relationships that is similar to what yoga and meditation offer in the realm of potentializing and actualizing our full spiritual identity. My experience over the last 20 years compels me to go a step further. It is my premise that the realm of man-woman relating contains the ingredients to serve as an ideal “flow” practice, one that pushes us to new heights of attention and receptivity to sensation, while opening us up to vistas of connection and communication that simply aren’t available to us in the two-dimensional world of relating that we are all too accustomed to. Just like the Native American wisdom which teaches that poisonous plants always grow close to their own antidotes, relationships contain the solutions to their own problems. So for all the places where we feel blocked, sexually and otherwise, we can be assured that orgasm is just within reach. Indeed, orgasm is well-poised to be our next great path toward personal growth.

Section 3: Power, Orgasm, and Surrender

To access our orgasm means that we find ourselves in full custody of her power—something that we want for all our clients. In this case, we don't define power as force or, really, any kind of exertion—just as we don't define orgasm as climax. Force entails the assumption of a rigid sense of control that has us putting in a lot of effort to move something—whether it be a person or an unfavorable circumstance in our lives. In contrast, power allows us to be swept up by the momentum of our vitality such that we are literally moved by it in a seemingly effortless fashion.

A fully expressed and truly turned-on man or woman can always find ways to access their orgasm, and thus, their true power. To access your orgasm means that you see every challenge as an opportunity to test your limits and expand even more deeply into your potential. And every moment brings a new choice: will I play or won't I? Will I use the circumstances in front of me to generate a sense of delight for myself and for others?

When we convert our notion of power into something that operates in the buoyant realm of play rather than the diehard, cutthroat battlefield of competition, financial difficulty becomes a money game. Romantic disappointment gets filed away under “practice makes perfect.” And success in one round doesn't mean you get an easier round the next time—what fun would that be? Like any trailblazer with half a soul, you know that you might lose the game and that it might get downright ugly, but you play all out anyway.

Most importantly, the person who accesses their power uses it to change the world around him or her: educating rather than shaming or talking-down-to; entering and transforming a situation rather than avoiding or judging it; and showing others how they will benefit from his or her freedom rather than merely demanding it. It's a far cry from the kind of qualities that we tend to free-associate with when it comes to power: brass-knuckled authority, business suits and power lunches, an eat-or-be-eaten/zero-sum-game that fills the coffer with spoils. In short, the kind of whip-in-hand (typically masculine-oriented) ascendancy that many of us secretly want but that often feels like it comes at too steep a cost, especially for women.

Unfortunately, while high-power women have tasted the fruits of their success in boardrooms, they typically experience guilt around having it. Focusing on the power that is often confused with authority in the daylight world of deals and appearances, such women are also oblivious to their true power. Often, they choose to siphon the dregs of other people's power—parroting images of power they've encountered or hiding behind a man, and usually ultimately feeling resentful or unseen. There is an unconscious coda that in order to be powerful, women need to suppress their innate femininity. But the truth is that we must debunk this fallacy; our power is infinitely generative, creative, and connected to orgasm. Our power isn't about dividing and conquering; it is about surrender.

We say that surrender is the entry point to power and orgasm, because when we are powerful, we are experiencing such a surfeit of energy and overflow that we cannot help but open to those around us. To surrender is the highest form of power there is, because it requires immense trust in our own generativity, especially in the face of the unknown. Withholding is what powerless people often do, and it comes from fear, closure, the relentless need to come across as “right,” which pretty much precludes the kind of receptivity that leads to actual connection.

Surrender is the highest form of a woman’s power. A woman in her natural bounty possesses the beauty of nectar flowing from a stargazer lily. When she is in such a state of total receptivity, her bounty flows from her with ease. And when she’s like that, everything changes; the very nature of power changes.

I used to always think that to admit I want power isn’t a very spiritual thing to do, but truly, what is a person without power? The ability to move and create comes from true power, so women especially need to lift the taboo off the desire to have it without mistaking the as the real thing. And when we handle our power, we take responsibility for everything in our lives, the good and the bad, so that our response is always an unconditional yes. We acknowledge and treat our more irrational and difficult emotions with responsibility and care so that they don’t come out in underhanded or unskillful ways.

Power is not the same thing as force. Power is receptive, while force is not. Power works to heal, while force exerts all its energy to build defenses. Accessing our orgasm means that we harness our true power, and not by dint of force.

In many ways, we can separate power and force into the classic dichotomies that are along similar lines as the complementary pairs of receptive and active, feminine and masculine. They are not necessarily at odds; they simply represent wildly different paradigms. A woman who is in her power is not attempting to access will or agency, but something infinitely deeper. In fact, men who are diverted off the straight and narrow path by the mysteries of feminine unpredictability are quite lucky, for if such a thing didn’t exist, we would be living in a dry, linear, and sterile world. We make the mistake of believing that the feminine is subservient to the masculine, in actuality and in theory, but if we were to visualize an iron fist in a velvet glove, we would come closer to the kind of complementarity that defines male-female dynamics.

Let’s approach it from the perspective of physics. Physicists who have analyzed the nature of force know that it’s readily apparent why it must always ultimately succumb to power. Because force automatically creates counter-force, its effect is limited by definition. We could say that force itself is a movement, and at that, one that requires friction. It moves from point A to point B against opposition. Power, on the other hand, is like a standing field that is motionless. Gravity itself, for instance, does not move against anything. Its power makes all objects within its field spin or sink, but the gravity field stays still.

Because force is always creating counter-force, it tends to be more about polarizing rather than unifying, which is why it generally leads to a one-up, one-down end result. Polarization always implies conflict; its cost, therefore, is typically high. Because force incites polarization, it inevitably produces a win/lose dichotomy, and because somebody always loses, enemies are always created. Constantly faced with enemies, force requires perpetual defense. And as we all know, defensiveness is invariably costly, whether in the marketplace, politics, or the bedroom. Because its response to conflict is defensive rather than generative, it tends to deplete our orgasm rather than feed it.

Power has the ability to heal, as well as to magnetize your desires effortlessly rather than utilizing manipulation or other tactics to get what we want. The problem with force is that it can turn men into relentless tyrants, and women into nagging harpies. Suddenly, all of our attention and energy is constellated around what we perceive to be our enemy; but of course, the more we try to stamp out this enemy through complaining, sport-fucking, workaholism, or any one of the defenses that's always at the ready, the more we tend to draw the undesirable qualities closer. Women have learned to rely on manipulation as a primary tactic to get what they want, but the true source of feminine power is almost like gravity—it brings what we want to us, precisely because we have had the fortitude and patience to sink into our desire, often without the desire to satiate it right away. Rather than desperate damsels in distress wringing our hands over the thing we can't have, we allow our very yearning to become the jet fuel that gets us moving. This relishing of desire is a hallmark of orgasm, and it (eventually) makes others flock to us like bees to honey.

Men, in turn, have learned to rely on external motivating factors—wads of cash, a corner office, a hot girlfriend—as demonstrations of their power, but just as a woman's true power lies in her ability to surrender, a man's true power lies in his ability to connect his actions to a sense of purpose. His power lies in his agency and ability to produce results in the world. Sitting idly on a mountain of ideas, or allowing himself to be emasculated, or failing to catalyze his woman's "irrational" emotions into fuel for her own surrender are all (in)actions that leave a man feeling powerless; they leave his greatness unexamined, because he has not learned to use it in service of something much larger than himself. A man's true power (agency) is inextricably connected to a woman's true power (surrender). A surrendered woman is a godsend when it comes to launching a man into his natural state of creativity and bounty—which isn't limited by the cultural dictates of productivity, as it goes way beyond superficial workaholism to include a colorful panorama of more exciting options. Likewise, a man with true agency is like manna from the heavens to a woman who wants to surrender; instead of buying into her damsel-in-distress ruses or using her "neediness" as a cue to disconnect, he keys into her deepest desire and turns up the heat even more, daring her to have what she most hungers for. His power is not egotistically derived; just as the surrendered woman longs for her man's liberation, the truly powerful man longs to give his woman exactly what she wants.

And of course, if power is ultimately about surrender, power exists not in your circumstances but in your responses to them. In OMing, it's the ability to get off on any stroke. A person who is fully orgasmic has the capacity to turn on a dime, to change direction exactly as the moment requires. This type of momentum arises not from a sense of force but from a sense of power. Again, force is about moving something, while power is about being moved by something. Thus, power exists in our response rather than our circumstances. Rather than struggling with changing our conditions so that we can finally be happy, we respond to them with curiosity, openness, and a willingness to engage with reality—with what is rather than what we wish it to be. Orgasm isn't about dispensing with our desires, however; it is simply about using everything that is in our vicinity as fuel for the fire that burns within.

Keep in mind that gathering power and feeling power can seem like two very distinct experiences. One of the inevitable consequences of surrender is spiraling into the sense that we are falling apart, that we are descending into some specially fashioned hell of our own making, in which relationship, jobs, and twenty-year friendships can be blasted to smithereens in a moment. In the absence of resistance and the many barricades we've used to fortify ourselves against the unknown, we suddenly find ourselves free-falling into a control-free environment in which the previous rules, which seemed to make sense and keep everyone safe, are utterly baseless. But we have to go down in order to gather our power; the feminine is like the dark belly of a massive ship: it's the dirtiest place on board because it's the home of the coal-firing furnace. And you can sing the praises of the clean fresh air above, but if the furnace goes cold, you're not going anywhere.

Nietzsche once said that if we want to ascend to the branches of heaven, we have to descend to the roots of hell. When we decide to go deep, which is a consequence of surrender, we may initially feel the panic and claustrophobia that might mark the falling-apart process, simply because we haven't learned the alchemical process, which includes a process of disintegration and transformation. It requires feeling, metabolizing, and deriving power from our seemingly helpless states rather than throwing in the towel and giving up. We are so accustomed to working within cramped quarters that when something goes awry, we usually find ourselves digging out of the rubble and finding ourselves in a space that seems too cavernous to navigate. Learning to expand into this new space, rife with possibilities and danger, is equivalent to increasing our having level: our ability to simply hold sensation and to receive something other than that pale, lifeless desire we've always known. This receptivity is tantamount to surrender.

Of course, few people want to stomach the pain and uncertainty that "going down" requires. Change occurs as pain, and we, for the most part, avoid it at all cost. Most of us attempt to bolster ourselves with self-help affirmations, put on a shit-eating grin, and hoist ourselves up by the bootstraps. Staying buoyant might work for a while, but it's usually not sustainable. When we allow ourselves to descend that dark stairwell (maybe not all at once but in gradients), we access our true power; we expand the scope of what we can handle, which means there is nothing that we cannot handle.

Power is not an instantaneous game, which is an achievement-based view; in our view, it is circuitous and process-oriented. You can tap into the kind of force required to “do” something immediately, but power is developed. It’s like oil bubbling beneath the surface; in order to find it, you have to risk even more than you thought you would. You have to dig deeper. Orgasm is our most natural power source, and the good news is that, unlike oil, it’s a renewable one. Those who are connected to their power can access their orgasm easily and fully, and are naturally more powerful than others.

Women are especially prone to misperceptions about the source of their power. While the feminist movement and the current pop-culture moxie around women’s empowerment have certainly given classical sexist boilerplates a run for their money, many of the women who’ve come through my doors are looking for something more. Not just trite instructions on how to corral a man’s lasting interest or stick up for themselves in the face of an overbearing in-law or boss, but a deep and nourishing philosophy by which to live their lives and find a deeper sense of overall gratification. This is where orgasm comes into play. It allows us to sweep through the taboos and unspoken shame that are clogging up the artery of our sex with so much junk food. We are able to open to the aspects of darkness that we all too often fear when we would be better off befriending them. For women, our “too-muchness,” our legendary “insatiability” which has threatened to topple civilizations with its primal energy, is our power—and it’s often been used against us. Women’s training revolves around convincing others to give them what they want, by demonstrating their own brokenness and whining about how complicated life is. This learned helplessness hides a most potent bit of information: we are sitting on a veritable goldmine that we know very little about. Typically, women who have not learned to access their power have been taught to play a specific role and be content there, and if they can’t (no matter how many yoga retreats and hours of therapy they’ve clocked), they believe that the problem lies with them. However, it’s actually the opposite: such women have power beyond what most of them know, and they can learn how to steer it. Anger, frustration, anxiety, and compulsion aren’t the problem; they’re merely the fuel to be utilized.

When we learn to build our capacity for surrender, we enter the realm of play—which is the volitional activation of the involuntary (brought to us by our old friend, the limbic system): that place within us where we cannot hide or gloss over our appearance with polite conversation and all the “right” verbiage. Orgasm breaks through all the barriers of propriety and lays it down straight. In this place, we learn who we truly are, free of conditioning and shy deference. This is where true creativity reins free, unshackled from shoulds and have-to’s.

There are two conflicting conversations happening in our mind at any given time—practice versus theory. You might think you can predict the eddies and whorls of where you’ll go, but what we refer to as the emergent behaviors of a person aren’t intuitively obvious by theory alone. When we’re dealing with the involuntary, we often find ourselves thrown into experiences and behaving in ways we didn’t think we would.

There's a story I tell of a student in class who claimed that she was all about light and love and compassion. One day the class went outside to play a simple jump rope exercise and she suddenly became dominant and controlling, yelling and directing people where to go. There's who we think we are, and who we are experientially. Orgasm breaks down your ideas of who you think you are and lets the true self emerge so that you can integrate it and be whole. You take very part with you, the good and the bad.

In the realm of coaching, play is a form of surrender because it foregoes brute force in favor of more creative solutions. For instance, when someone offers you an opinion in the form of a question (seemingly innocuous but maybe loaded with a smidge of judgment), the only thing you as a coach can do is to offer a better option that makes the old one obsolete. You can offer a story as a way out, which says absolutely nothing about the other person's opinion but speaks to the idea of a new possibility; a more direct approach might come off as overly didactic, which your client will likely resist.. And if the person's deeper will, the seat of their involuntary, truly desires another option, it'll take on your story without hesitation. ("Oh, that's so interesting...it reminds me of something else I heard before...")

This is what the courage of going into your own basement gives you: the ability to be able to say whatever you want in such a way that people choose to engage with it rather than to shut you down. It is not based on debate, persuasion, arguing your points, or outsmarting another person. Remember, this isn't about your ego trip; it's about stewarding both you and your questioning friend down a river that perhaps neither of you had ever thought to go down before. In this case, the detour becomes the main attraction. You don't need to have an "answer" or "solution" in a classical sense. When someone truly trusts you and recognizes your field of power, they'll be happy to follow you to the ends of the earth. When you are powerful, people automatically win just by loving you. And of course, you get what you want simply because it feels good to give, nothing more and nothing less. Such power is the opposite of underhanded manipulation tactics, or brute force, or even idiot compassion—where we get so afraid of feeling someone else's pain that we find ourselves stuck in emotional Chinese finger traps. When we are able to simultaneously release our agenda for ourselves and our agenda for the other person, we simply allow them to be who they are.

You are also infinitely patient and invested in the present. This is because taking a stance like leaning forward and suggesting that you cannot wait for your client to come into his or her own serves to trigger doubt within them. It's similar to deflecting a compliment from someone by denying it and saying, "Oh my god, you look so much prettier." Opting for what's next or what's more removes you from the present moment and reduces another's trust in you; and surrender is always about marinating in the reality of what is right in front of you.

As a coach, your only real job is to speak to their Master. Their Master is the one who knows the answer, the one who designed their particular course of obstacles to have the experience that they're having. Your job is to get people plugged in to the orgasm; and

once they're plugged in, their Master will naturally stay awake. Of course, every now and then, some refinement and adjustments are required to keep yourself and your clients connected to this power source. In order to get them to that point, you simply have to be observant and point out the discrepancies between what they desire and what they are actually living. What you're looking for is how close people are to their truth, which requires perfecting your own bullshit meter. And this requires being a little ruthless. After all, you are beholden to no one just as you are in service of all.

In order to help others in this way, we need to ensure that we're not running on empty. In terms of going from powerlessness to a full tank, it's simple enough: if you're experiencing a deficit in orgasm, the best you can get is to go. But if you start with the orgasm veritably flowing from your pores and a thought like "My pussy is awesome, and I want to take this thing on the road and see what it can do," your enthusiasm will propel you to many new places and to infinite possibilities.

You keep your tank full by keeping up with your practices: OM, fear inventory, yoga, and meditation. These practices will keep your crucible hot and clear so that you may absorb any darkness and turn it back out with love.

Section 4: Pleasure, Enjoyment, and Flow

What makes us happy? What actually works in bringing about deep and abiding happiness? Probably not what you think. In fact, humans are dismally mistaken about what makes them happy. We know this because it's been studied quite extensively in the last decade or so. And the results are rather surprising.

We are pleasure seekers. And nowhere is this more true than in our relationships. Which, as we will see, is part of the problem. Because pleasure, it turns out, is a poor route to happiness.

In his national bestseller *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience*, author Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi makes an important distinction between *pleasure and enjoyment*: pleasure being what we feel when we partake of a good meal or a relaxing vacation; and enjoyment being what we feel in those moments when we are immersed in an activity that demands our fullest possible engagement, such as skiing, chess, or musicianship.

These two routes to happiness differ greatly in their effect on us. Quoting the author, “Pleasure is an important component of the quality of life, but by itself it does not bring happiness...[Because pleasures] do not produce psychological growth. They do not add complexity to the self.” Their effect on us is transitory. A more lasting happiness is brought about by enjoyable experiences. “Enjoyment is characterized by this forward movement: by a sense of novelty, of accomplishment. Playing a close game of tennis that stretches one’s ability is enjoyable, as is reading a book that reveals things in a new light, as is having a conversation that leads us to express ideas we didn’t even know we had. Closing a contested business deal, or any piece of work well done, is enjoyable. None of these experiences may be particularly pleasurable at the time they are taking place, but afterwards, we think back on them and say, ‘That really was fun’ and wish they would happen again.”

In a recent TED talk, Dr. Martin Seligman, noted psychologist in the field of Positive Psychology (which is the study of going from good to better, of cultivating happiness, fulfillment, talent, intelligence, and other positive qualities as opposed to treating dysfunction), makes a similar distinction between the pleasurable and the enjoyable. He refers to pleasure, or all of the things that produce identifiably positive emotions, as “happiness in the Hollywood sense.”

The pleasant life has three drawbacks. The first drawback is that it’s heritable [meaning, how you respond to pleasure is mostly genetic]. The second is that positive emotion habituates. It’s like French vanilla ice cream. The first taste is a 100%, and by the time you’re down to the sixth taste, it’s gone. And third, it’s not particularly malleable, meaning it’s hard to make big changes in how you respond to pleasure. Furthermore, in the big picture, pleasure makes “almost no contribution to life satisfaction.”

Dr. Seligman points to two other forms of happiness that affect us much more deeply and

enduringly. One is engagement—the feeling of being so immersed in what you’re doing that time seems to stop and all self-consciousness falls away. (This is the same flow state to which the book *Flow* is dedicated.) And the other is meaning, the sense of purpose and fulfillment you feel when you have found something more important than yourself, and dedicated yourself to it. (Note that both of these states are pretty similar to female surrender and male agency, respectively.)

One of the big problems of relationships, as we have said, is that we have tended to use them for pleasure. In the words of Ram Das, it’s not that we want too much—it’s that we don’t want enough. We are aiming too low. Nowhere is this more true than in our relationships: we’ve settled for pleasure when what we want is enjoyment. People, especially women, don’t know what to ask for because they are unaware of what is available or possible; they only know that they have a desire that isn’t being fulfilled by what’s on the menu. And this is why men must be willing to risk failure; they must be willing to try, fail, and try again. Because it’s the only way both men and women can get to what they truly want.

The way that we develop our capacity for engagement and meaning, which gets us to enjoyment, is to think of attention as our greatest resource in life. Your capacity to focus your attention determines the quality of your life. And your ability to determine where you put your attention and whether or not you can hold it there effects everything from the quality of your relationships to your ability to succeed in your career. It determines whether or not you are a good parent, as well as whether or not you are able to transform your dreams into reality. Your attention is the driving factor that makes the difference between an ordinary life and an extraordinary life.

Extraordinary experiences are marked by a quality of freedom; we have broken through the ordinary, everyday, mundane experience into something that is novel, unfamiliar. There are two primary ways to achieve extraordinary experience. The first is to push ourselves by intensifying the experience itself. For example, we can sky-dive, run a marathon, undertake a project that looks to be out of our range—and then be changed in such a way by the execution of the experience that we, in fact, are new to ourselves. Ladies and gentlemen, we’ve been launched into the brave new world of the involuntary.

The second way we can get extraordinary experience is through slow, repeated activity. The experience here is something akin to playing scales on a piano or chopping vegetables. At first you may feel a little stiff or rigid, but after a period of time, something clicks into place and there is a sense that you have lost yourself in the experience. Your fingers feel moved across the keys and the knife moves effortlessly. What you used intensity to do in the prior circumstances, you are using repetition to do here. It is like the difference between using a sand blaster or a running stream to shape a rock. Both work, and both are necessary.

In each case, what is being opened is your attention, and the quality of your life is a direct result of the amount of attention you have available at any point. Having more attention

available liberates you; it allows you to choose happiness, passion, and fulfillment because you can afford them irrespective of the circumstance. And this is true power. With rich attention, nothing can get you down and already positive experiences can be enhanced.

It's safe to say that very few people who have developed their attention in just one of the two arenas have full free access to their attention at all times. What I mean by this is that those who have achieved extraordinary experience through intensity experiences cannot necessarily transfer their attention to the more subtle, slow, repetition arenas, and vice-versa.

Examples of intensity experiences that we are most familiar with might be surfing, hard and fast fucking, a tight poker game, drugs, a major business deal. All of your attention is called forth by external circumstances and you either match it with the level of attention necessary and get the result—or you don't.

Repetition experiences might include breathing meditation, mantras and prayer, woodworking, “the art” of such things as flower arranging, tea ceremonies, and the like. The former types of experience make your attention circumstance-dependent, meaning you may find that you become an intensity junkie who requires increased stimulus to get the hit and experience lows when you aren't getting it. But, more than this, what you find is that your attention is not subtle enough to experience full enjoyment in slow repetition activities; it starts to wander when you are in line at the DMV or are the recipient of a soft and gentle touch.

Repetition experiences, however, can become location-dependent, meaning that it is not so much about the activity as it is the environment. The system of this person may be fragile and hypersensitive such that they require low distraction, quietness, and not too much pressure. These people can become “precious,” meaning that they overwhelm easily precisely because they feel so much, and their attention is so close to the surface that they need to shut out the distraction in order to function in the world.

This is why I recommend developing an alternating current of attention, or attention that spans the gradients. And there is no better place than in the arena of sexuality where everything is available, from high intensity, harder and faster fucking to deep “spiritual” elements that focus on the inclusion of breath and nuanced touch. An extraordinary sex life runs the gamut, all of which can be transferred to every other aspect of your life. It is the marriage of these two types of attention that brings about a sense of freedom and euphoria because your attention can meet whatever need arises.

The challenge for most people is that their attention is subtly squandered into unconscious habits. It's like paying for a gym membership that you never bothered to cancel. Maybe you tend to explode when your partner doesn't put their socks in the hamper. You unconsciously expend energy that could otherwise be used for pleasure because a habit that you have not bothered to cancel is in place. And when we are loving

another person from the locus point of our orgasm, this is about caring so much that you refuse to waste precious energy entangled in the emotional entrapments of your waking reality. Maybe this means you're willing to work through your impulse to scream at your husband when he's being particularly challenging. It means being unattached to his process and emotional energies because they are his to work with. Your yelling back, for example, is only feeding his fire and not serving either of you toward more enjoyment and flow. This is a small example, but it may help illustrate that it's a pathway of refining where you place your attention that fosters freedom by disengaging us from the things that are spurious and instigated by old habits and kneejerk reactions.

Or maybe you are the type that represses and gets silent when you are disappointed. And this same energy now gets locked up in holding something back. The shift from an average or even good life is going to require an investment on your part; it is going to require you to look at where your expenditure of attention is inefficient and could otherwise be used towards something more enjoyable. The investment will more than pay for itself over time, like insulating the attic of your house to save on heating and cooling bills.

Here's a brief exercise to work with. There are two types of attention: active and passive. Put your attention on something in front of you for ten seconds. What happened? Perhaps you put your attention on a candle, and it brought back a memory of a night with your lover; or perhaps you got lost in the scent, and started feeling nostalgic for a time when you weren't working so hard and could enjoy such things, and then maybe you felt frustrated that you had to work so hard. In this case, the candle itself has moved to the background, and what remains is your reaction to the candle. In other words your reaction is taking precedence over the actual experience. This is called passive attention.

This kind of attention drifts from feeling to feeling and from thought to thought. We quite literally get "carried away," "lost in our thoughts." Many people feel that their life is not alive or passionate enough, and this type of attention is the culprit. Because all vividness, all connection, all passion is happening right here and now. The further you get carried away by your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and preferences, the further away you are from that electricity that comes into focus when something is new. So we often rely on novelty to artificially boost our wandering, passive attention rather than strengthening the muscle of our awareness.

What's called for here is active attention. Active attention is marked by the fact that when you place it on something, it can steadily remain there and suddenly the object of your attention seems to come alive and become more interesting. Your mind does not need to scramble for new things to look at and think about because you are able to hold your attention in one place and on one thing, and as you do, you discover greater depths of beauty. It's not a matter of blocking anything out; looking at a mural on the side of building and deeply taking it in doesn't require you to block out the birds, the trees, the wind, or people and cars passing by. You are aware of all of them but they're not diverting you from fully attending to the beauty of the painting.

Great lovemaking, great relating, great anything is a result of this attention. Chances are that if your partner is upset with you, they are not feeling your attention. Or perhaps you are only giving them what they know is passive attention; you are going through the motions without the investment you had when the relationship was new and fresh. Not that your partner is any less interesting or vast or novel, but your ability to train your attention on them in a meaningful way ran out and you are not able to see their complexity.

The way to cultivate desire is to balance slow and flow. I have a friend, a deeply studied martial artist and chi gong practitioner and teacher, who talks about how he balances slow and flow. He'll do walking meditation, a kind of hyper-aware slow walking in which one's whole body and mind are engaged, and everything is vivid and magnified. Then he'll do tag-sparring, a kind of high-intensity contact sport in which you're moving and responding to your opponent much too swiftly to think or plan; it's all about your split-second instincts and intuition. This is where he sees the results of all of the slow practice he's been doing. It's also where he can clearly see what he needs to work on next. So when he returns to his next slow practice, he can practice just those things, thousands of times, slowly, methodically, repetitively (but with full engagement each and every time), until he gets fantastically good at it and his body can do it spontaneously and as quickly as he needs to, without conscious thought. Attention also helps us fortify our intuition.

The way to create slow is to increase awareness rather than pressure. Where you would otherwise crank up the level of incoming stimulation, instead turn up your awareness. Pay attention to that which you normally write off and ignore as being the same. Treat every experience as worthy of your attention. There is a saying: If you are bored, you are boring. Boredom requires you to consciously ignore all of the aspects of the NOW moment that make it unique. Overstimulation exacerbates the very problem you're trying to compensate for by numbing both your mind and your senses. You will end up liking anything you put your attention on. Increasing your awareness helps dispel the myth that anything is a simple repeat, not worth bothering with.

The way to create flow is to balance skills with challenges. When the challenges we face far exceed our abilities, we experience it as anxiety. Challenges that fall far below our skill level likewise will not get us into flow. When we are at the very limits of what we're capable of, and are pushed to our edges (where we enter the involuntary), that is how we find ourselves in the flow state.

Section 5: The Rules of Play

When we talk about orgasm, we talk about being turned on. “Turned on” is simply the best way to describe what really happens when a woman opens up. It feels like someone has finally turned the electricity on, or like the genie has sprung full force out of the lamp. Turn-on is the feeling of arousal and ignition in the body. It isn’t about force or exertion, which usually end up exhausting us and having us slink back shamefacedly into the parts of ourselves that find it convenient to stay small. Turn-on is a feeling of something greater than you picking you up and sweeping you along. It’s the feeling of being in flow, where all of your movements happen effortlessly and with ease, where your deepest desires rub noses with synchronicity and naturally burgeon from your body out into the world. There’s a feeling of euphoria, headiness, like everything is finally happening just as you’ve always wanted it to. It might feel alert but relaxed; it might feel hysterically happy and excited. No matter how it manifests, it always feels like something is coming through you from fathomless reaches.

The feeling of turn-on is being swept away by the pleasure of whatever you’re doing, right here and now. We feel it most potently when we’re sexually aroused, but turn-on happens in various areas of our lives. Maybe you get into that space when you’re having a great conversation with a new friend, splashing joyously in puddles during a thunderstorm, acting in a play before an audience of hundreds, or enjoying a delicious evening indoors with your lover.

In essence, turn-on is what happens when you let your desire out to play. Turn-on puts us in overdrive, sends us diving headlong into our experience. That rush is what makes life rich and meaningful.

According to Stuart Brown, the author of *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*, humans are fundamentally equipped for and need to play actively throughout our lives by nature’s design. In fact, our adult biology is unique compared to other animals, as our capacity and need for flexibility, novelty, and exploration persists as we get older. Adults who don’t play tend towards narrow-mindedness, inflexibility, humorlessness, pessimism, and the tendency to react to stress with violence or depression compared to the adult whose play life persists.

In many ways, our earliest relationship to play is connected to desire. As children, for example, we don’t need to be taught what we want—we simply know we want something. We see a puddle, and we jump into it! We anticipate the splash with delight, and we relish the feeling of floating through the air and landing. But we were probably civilized by a harsh rebuke from Mom and the message that allowing ourselves to be impelled that irrational urge to get dirty and play made us bad. We internalize the message that following our desire, engaging with it in the spirit of play and non-judgment, is bad, and so we learn to domesticate the wild beast of desire, only grudgingly entertaining her rampant appetite from time to time. As a result, later in our lives, we often are at a loss as

to what we truly want, and even if a genie popped out of a lamp and granted us three wishes, we might be hard pressed to say what would tickle our fancy the most. This is because we've essentially forgotten how to play.

So if we want to coax our desire out again (civility be damned), we must learn how to do one of the things that play mandates: that is, walk steadily into the unknown. Getting clear on what we want is like upping the ante in slow gradations. If we want to learn how to swim, we start off at the shallow end of the pool. But soon we're going to master the basics, and we are going to start getting curious about trying something a little bit harder. So we dip a toe in. We get excited by the new challenge, and it lasts for a few weeks. Soon we're ready to upgrade again. The key is not to be recklessly spontaneous; it's to take it slowly in order to build trust one inch at a time. Accordingly, with our desires, we start following them where they want to go, little by little. We might need to dip back into old patterns and take cover in familiar shelter. But once we regain equilibrium, we can walk back into the water and explore a little more.

When we begin to engage with our desire, and to play with our fears and boredom, a world that once appeared shadowy and dangerous begins to reveal its charms and particularities. The first trick is to simply identify what brings you pleasure, and move in the direction of that pleasure. What absorbs your attention, drives your energy, activates your curiosity, delights your senses, and fills your veins with rapture? How can you begin to incorporate these experiences into your life on a daily basis? When you start to view your world through a lens of childlike wonder and become more attuned to these things, even a seemingly mundane encounter holds the potential of serendipity and surprise, and the darkest of corners will surely be lit up by a splash of color and excitement.

The question "Why do I play?" determines everything. If you think about it, in our culture, the number one reason people play is to win and to make money. The idea of entering this realm may be fraught with all kinds of reasons, but then there's just playing to play. If you are playing to win, you don't actually end up getting worked as much; but if you are playing to play, which means you're doing what you can to keep the momentum going, you are definitely going to get worked in the process. Most people don't make it to that point; the only way to really stay in the game is to stay turned on.

Your response to everything is determined by your interpretation of it. Think about it—that's the only real freedom you have. And you have the right to develop the power and skill to interpret every experience however you desire. You can make everything in your path good or bad with respect to your goal. Learning to respond from a place of body interpretation rather than mental interpretation (i.e., judgment) takes a bit of practice. You can also sit in the midst of some pretty heated experiences without reacting—you can turn off the mental chatter like the best meditator on silent retreat, but the body is the keenest and most skilled of interpretation machines. If you're trying to rise above it, you'll become disassociated; it is your greatest ally to turn-on and to play that you can discover. And determining how you're going to play by using your body as an interpretive gauge will lead you to some interesting revelations.

We are willing to engage in this space of play when we walk into a room and seek both the fastest-moving and the slowest-moving places; it's like a game of chess, and both places are powerful positions. This willingness to balance two extremes leads to a recognition of all the gradients that lie in the middle. Between the two I find the sweet spot and I find the complexity of both sides. But in entering such a zone, one has to be willing to acknowledge they are safe before they can actually play. You can't play and self-protect at the same time. And the best protection that exists is play.

Let's look at the Rules of Play:

1. Your power as a player is determined by your capacity to be played.

Of course, "getting played" doesn't sound like the most pleasant prospect, but think about it this way: If you get lost in something, you are discovering an aspect of yourself you didn't know. Joseph Campbell notes that getting lost—or falling down the rabbit hole, getting sucked into the abyss, failing (or succeeding at getting the wool pulled over your eyes)—is an integral part of the hero's journey. It definitely takes you off the more masculine, task-oriented, in-control path, but your ability to willingly take that detour means you're open and flexible as to where you'll eventually find yourself. Only when your intellect is plunged in darkness do you discover how brilliant your heart is. But the darkness must be honestly come by—by pushing your intellect to the point that you trip the circuit breaker.

2. Play includes all...but not all includes play.

You might've heard the concept of "god includes everything, even the rejection of god." The highest form of play is similar to god—the infinite game holds within it a host of finite games, like Russian dolls nested within each other. Play is all-inclusive and omnipresent; but when we are disconnected from orgasm, we are unable to recognize and operate from such openness. We are plunged into a grayscale world that seems relatively devoid of either god or play, but our lack of attainment doesn't mean that neither exists. It just means that we've opted for atheism when we could have chosen curiosity instead.

3. Vacillation is hell; All IN is the byproduct of good practice.

Commitment to the game means that we are fully available to experience the entire gamut that is offered to us within it. When we put one foot in and one foot out, we compromise our ability to trust ourselves fully and allow our circumstances rather than our orgasm to dictate the terms of our participation. This kind of "will I or won't I?" waffling gets us nowhere fast; it also makes us rather untrustworthy to potential playmates.

4. The way to win is to play to keep the game going.

As James Carse, author of *Finite and Infinite Games*, has noted: "A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing

the play.” That means a finite game has a definitive end and a defined number of players, whereas infinite games transcend time restraints and invite anyone who is willing to play. OneTaste is, in a sense, a finite game. The goal is to touch the lives of a billion people through orgasm. In another sense, it’s an infinite game, because the orgasm takes us where we want to go, and it may also sneak in some new directives. The point is, the rules of a finite game are set in advance and can’t be changed, but the rules of an infinite game are always malleable, for the purpose of continuation and expansion. Of course, in order to keep playing, you need to acknowledge that you’re eventually going to graduate from the same old, same old. For example, when you find you don’t have any problems anymore, you fill up and put that problem-solving mind into solving problems that aren’t necessarily your own. Getting to full is both difficult and lovely. If you stay at full too long, it gets stale. Full rots if its not spent. And the best way to spend full is to keep playing.

5. Never hurt the game.

If you play with the basic rules outlined here, you’ll be a much better player overall. And while breaking the rules (hurting the game) doesn’t mean you’ll hurt the game irreparably, but there are both better and worse plays to make; the worse ones tend to short-circuit the game and stop it in its tracks, while the better ones keep everything in a state of constant flow.

6. Everything is of consequence.

Every detail matters. Every action is a communication. As a player—if you stop to deliberate whether something is part of the game or not—that judgment process serves to take you out of the field of play altogether. But when you see every minute aspect of your experience as part of the game, nothing is trivial or unworthy of attention anymore. The most subtle gesture assumes a texture and richness that you would never have been able to see prior to your willingness to play.

7. The lowest common denominator determines the level of play.

The slowest man on the rope determines the level of ascent on a mountain. And when someone rings the alarm and announces a red light (whether through compliments, criticism, judgment, or blame), play stops for everyone who is involved. The best player responds with equanimity to all of these things.

8. She or he who has the fewest rules wins.

We’re typically taught to respond to our hypervolatility with rigidity, but if you do that, all you have are the extremes of a swinging pendulum: hypervolatility and rigidity. In the realm of play, flexibility is everything—and the greatest demonstration of flexibility is having the fewest rules. In finding a gradient between hypervolatility and rigidity, we see that there is an entire purview between the two that our conditional turn-on has rejected. Our brains are trained to filter out all kinds of data according to our preferences. Thus, we find ourselves constantly creating rules and waiting for life to meet our narrow preferences.

When we recognize that we can get off every time on every single stroke, the result is an endlessly flexible mind. Orgasm is in approval of everything, whereas the need to barricade ourselves from possibility results in the generation of tons of rules. But when the best players are asked, "Would you rather be right or would you rather be happy?", they automatically know the answer.

9. Altruistic plays lose at first but win in the end.

Again, we must remember that while we've been indoctrinated into a winner-take-all culture in which even goalless play can assume the mantle of agenda-pushing, orgasm includes all. Nobody is left out, period. When you play for the freedom of another, you get freedom in return—it's that simple. The whole reason to do it is to have something that is much, much larger than you exert its influence over you so you are now receptive to subtle experiences of joy that you would never have dreamt were possible when you were playing a smaller, more localized game. When you win altruism, you lose the finite game of "win in at any cost." You open up to a grace that makes you and everyone in your field rise up from the dugout of the minor leagues.

10. The highest play is that which includes the other.

To limit our game to a select few is, effectively, to contract and create rules that narrow the scope of our game. Openness to the participation of others means that you are also creating a more complex, uncertain, and interesting system arising from a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions—simply because of the choice to include more others who can play with you.

11. Play only happens at the level of volition.

A client once expressed fear about her craving, not knowing what to do with it or about it. My response was simply that she should follow it like a lunatic—that's what it's there for. She was pretty insistent on categorizing her craving as bad, as a sort of "I want the cookie and I want it now" relentlessness that threatened to overtake all her more genteel inclinations. Her major fear was "molesting" other people. When I want the cookie and want it now, my response is typically to eat the cookie. If someone else is involved, you can't keep yourself from molesting them if your craving is that intense. My suggestion would be to simply gather together a large enough stable of molestable people so that they are each left with enough blood to survive. Just don't do it with civilians, find other freaks to do it with. The point is, people must be volitional in their play. They must choose it and want it. If they are coerced or forced, then that is not really play and it will only serve to suppress your better instincts and leave you miserable.

12. The game always plays you.

Attempting to outsmart the game or stay a step ahead of it is to defeat the purpose of playing. Constant strategizing is a method of maintaining control, but this control is an illusion to begin with. All games that you create will end up playing you. For example, imagine yourself setting up a game in which a friend of yours

goes on a blind date with a random person from an online dating site. Imagine that she goes along with it, but somehow, against all odds, she ends up picking your ex-boyfriend. Statistical probabilities don't really figure into the ironic punchline that most games will eventually end up delivering. You just never know what might happen, what will become a part of the game although you didn't design it to begin with.

13. The highest play is surrender.

The most generous thing you can do as a human being is to awaken. To awaken is to be in custody of your power, to be utterly surrendered to reality as opposed to constantly pushing up against the solid rock wall of fantasy. Surrender is a demonstration of utmost gratitude. When you are leaving that world of rigid conditions, you can say to the people around you—without a trace of sarcasm—that they loved you into this new awareness. I am deeply of belief that our biggest fear is disappointment, and the severest risk we face is the willingness to be disappointed. The biggest risk is being willing to be disappointed. That's where surrender comes in. True surrender begins when we make our peace with the certainty that, for instance, another will not always do what we want. We begin to trust a friend or a lover for real only after they've disappointed us, and forgiven them for disappointing us. "I trust you" in this sense means "Our relationship is based on something sturdier and deeper than always pleasing one another." Pushing your agenda in any way is violation, not play. And you asked for the high-level game, so you get the high-level play.

14. Two things make people go against the game: the perception that they cannot get what they want or that going against it will bring more attention/payoff than going with it.

This is where communication starts to fray around the edges. But when we stay connected with our own or another's desire, the game itself transforms and presents us with challenges that previously looked like obstacles. And when we are fueled by orgasm, the specifics of what we want don't really matter; we are being carried by something that is more enticing and more keyed into our desire than our preferences. We learn to open in the midst of our resistance and fear rather than to close down shop in search of greener pastures.

15. There are four levels of response when communication is not met: can't hear, can't understand, get angry, kill you.

A client once said, "I can't find OM partners where I live and I am angry about that and I want it to change, but I can't get over my anger at my last OM partner who left." As a coach, my approach to her anger and tumescence was to stroke the virus in her (which had the initial effect of making her feel that I was mad at her or mocking her). I said, "Well, it's very clear that you are playing god and that you think your anger has the capacity to change the world. And I think that what you're doing in terms of deciding what you want, then deciding you won't get it, is awesome." Of course, the client's response was to protest: "But I don't like it! I

mean, there is at least a huge part of me that wants to move.” This was the point where her sex came out, but then it retracted with more of the same self-victimizing b.s. So my response was to hit her again with a resonant stroke, whatever would get her to at least somewhat dismantle the untruth she was bringing to the table and see where she was asleep. That stroke can look like anger, but it is simply heavy pressure. I didn’t collude with her in saying that yes, she couldn’t get a partner and was right to hold on to her anger and righteousness. Instead, I made it so painful and uncomfortable to hold this story that she had to create another one. This is playing in intense territory, because we never know if the other person will respond to our strokes and receive the transmission we’re offering. And once they peak, you then decide if you are going to bring them up or bring them down. Our clients will sometimes hate us—they will mishear, misunderstand, get pissed, and want to kill us. These are all simply signs that communication has somehow been given the slip. Your response is to hit them where they can feel it, where there is no room for such defenses.

16. Aim for flow.

If you are playing to play, you aren’t doing it to get to the top of the mountain. It’s to have the experience of being in flow. When we aim for flow, our cognitive mind—which is constantly thinking, blueprinting, conceiving, scheming—is totally absorbed in the moment. You get a chance to relax, because there is nothing whatsoever to prove or to achieve. This is where you discover your true brilliance.

Section 6: Levels of Desire

Desire is truly the sorcerer's stone. It's the only divining rod capable of leading you to the hidden wellspring of joy buried beneath the surface of your life. So that begs the question: if it's right here, and it has so much detailed, personal information for us, why are we ignoring it so much of the time?

If you're like most people, who've equated living a full life with hedonism and living the right life with deferred gratification, you may be slightly uncomfortable with the idea that desire could be the internal compass that might set your course to true north. And honestly, it kind of makes sense. Desire doesn't follow the rules dictated by our society, and when we stop to tune in, we don't always like what it's saying.

Let's take a look at some of the arguments against desire that you may encounter along your journey. These are some of the thoughts that show up in opposition to paying attention to what your desire is telling you:

1. **You don't think you can get it—it's out of reach.** Besides, my desire is pointing me toward something that's clearly unattainable, so why am I listening to it? Of what value is it?
2. **You don't think you deserve it.** This is one to watch out for: people are often completely unaware that they don't feel worthy of something, even when their behavior strongly suggests it. This shows up as inexplicable self-sabotage.
3. **You think it's wrong, mistaken.** "Not him! Are you kidding me?! HIM?!" These are the most revealing of moments, because a true desire is coming into conflict with a set of rules or guidelines we've adopted along the way and have been using as our substitute compass. Our upbringing or environment has told us who we are and what we want, or should want, and we've taken it on as true, wearing the garb of that identity. Now desire is revealing our true identity underneath; of course, our mask-identity is going to object!
4. **You get overwhelmed, as if your mouth were on the spigot.** You get just a little bit of something and then find yourself saying: "Whoa, it's too much, I'm done." One example of this that we see a lot of is men running away from women who are turned on and ready to play. Such women are simply too turned-on for the guys' comfort zone.
5. **You are afraid of opening the floodgates of desire, due to your fear of insatiability, or your fear that you'll never ever get filled.** So you pick a substitute desire that compensates for an overabundance of desire, your fear that your desire is too much.

In this state of not trusting desire, here are some things we choose in its place. These are all the consolation prizes we accept in the face of our disbelief in our deeper desires.

1. **Fixing problems and deriving your happiness through problem-solving.** The problem is, someone who's obsessed with making things "better" can never allow the thing (or person) they are fixing to actually become fully fixed, because they have no idea how to relate with something/someone who isn't broken. We often see the men who are the most vocal "advocates" for women dying a horrible death when the woman they're fervently "supporting" finally lets go of her broken-winged bird game and reveals herself to be whole, turned-on, highly capable, and self-sufficient. It's as if such a result ends the only game he knows how to play rather than prompting him to find a less finite one.
2. **Avoidance and refusal to play or to engage.** When we consider the renunciation traditions of Buddhism or Catholicism, detachment and non-indulgence are talked up a lot. Desire is intrinsically bad. The concept of "temptation" arose from the idea that your desire for something is actually a giant red flag that this thing is to be avoided at all costs. Such denial leaves us dry, unimaginative, and left biting the hand of the orgasm that feeds us.
3. **Becoming the hungry ghost.** A hungry-ghost desire is a desire that can never be gratified by any amount of consumption. It is usually the result of trying to get gratification from the enactment of a compensating story. For example, the poor kid who can never become rich enough as an adult; or super-attractive man or woman who incongruously lives and behaves as the ugly duckling; or the first-generation American who never feels American enough, no matter how successful, popular, or in with the in-crowd they actually are; or the ex-lover who's eternally working out their Mommy or Daddy issues.
4. **Desire attached to a toxic mimic.** This is misplaced desire. For example, you may be craving sugar when your body is deficient in the amino acids glycine or glutamic acid. Or you may be with someone who adores and worships you, but isn't good at giving high-quality attention. The latter is such a potent nutrient that even a small amount gratifies; the former is a toxic mimic and no amount of it will suffice.
5. **Compensatory good.** People are naturally compassionate; science is, in fact, uncovering the evolutionary basis and biological mechanisms of empathy and altruism. People following their true desire veer organically towards goodness. Compensatory good is someone who is trying to be good. Some signifiers include righteousness and righteous indignation: a conscious clinging to a good behavior where you perceive you've been bad. If rule-following is a way of life, you discover your inability to operate without rules. Such a person places an undue emphasis on "rights" and harbors a fake benevolent superiority. There is a saying: "When you get to the island, get out of the boat." Compensatory good is like folding the

paper back and leaving it folded; the very things that saved you have become hindrances, but you're still attached to them.

6. **Choosing the trick because you don't believe in the real thing.** There are many examples of this: using NLP as a stand-in for intimacy and connection; using Pickup because you doubt your authentic self will be sufficient; using sex to get what you want (which isn't bad except that it fucks with your ability to have sex for its nutrients alone); opting for looking good rather than feeling good because you don't trust your desire; or choosing the right thing but for the wrong reason, so everyone thinks you were so great but you have to sit in the knowledge that you cheated. All types of "spiritual bypass" fall in this category.
7. **The swinging pendulum of deprivation and indulgence.** This includes extreme habits like love-hate relationships, yo-yo dieting, and other black-and-white tactics where neither extreme seems to work, and in some weird way, inevitably leads to the opposite, in increasing extremes.
8. **Pumping.** This is trying to squeeze more satisfaction from a situation than it can give. It's a lot like taking steroids to get your body to do things far beyond what it was designed for. It tends to be steeped in over-consumption, hard-and-fast porn sex, and incessant novelty-seeking. Pumping includes all forms of over-stroking. It's the polar opposite of skillful peaking, the art of staying exactly in the sweet spot, with the changing stroke.

As you can see, in the absence of sunlight, our desire can become a stunted, malformed version of itself, living on the occasional measly pleasure critters that scamper our way from time to time. And we wonder why our desire won't come out and play nice when we actually want it to! We wonder why we can't have the orgasm of our dreams, why we can't feel our partner, why we always seem to find ourselves in dead-end relationships. But when we're playing a lifelong game of Whack-a-Mole, bonking our desire on the head and pushing it away 99% of the time, is it any wonder it doesn't trust us when we ask it to take its rightful place beside us that last 1% of the time?

We want our desire on our terms, and our terms alone. And if it raises its inconvenient little head at the wrong time, we reject it and send it back into the dark. The problem with this strategy—other than the fact that we lose access to our desire when we want it—is that nothing stays underground forever. If we don't give our desire a clean, well-lit place to express itself, it's going to roam restlessly in the hinterlands of our shadow. And given that our desire is the most potent, volatile force at our disposal, it's almost guaranteed to express itself at, horror of horrors, the most inappropriate times—like, for example, when you're standing at the altar being urged to say "I do" and coming to the dramatic realization that hundreds of thousands of dollars later, you're not entirely convinced that you even love your partner, much less wish to grant them the title of lifelong co-pilot. Or maybe you choose to suck it up and bury that instinctive knowledge, eat an entire Sara

Lee frozen cheesecake, get addicted to Internet porn, buy an expensive pair of jeans you can't afford, or have an affair that sends your tidy little life careening out of orbit.

Such distractions can be a way of not listening to that little voice in the back of our heads telling us who we really are (because that would change everything), but even when we think we're being clever by digging our heels in a little more and adamantly saying "no way" to the things that will truly fulfill us, more often than not, the unwillingness to take responsibility for our desires can result in them leaking out in, well, undesirable ways.

So, sure, you can follow society's rules to the letter. It would be the safe thing to do, and it comes with obvious and tangible rewards. And this strategy might lead you to success, in the conventional definition. But success by itself is just more empty calories. It's not the real meal, the nourishing lifeblood that you yearn for. The nutrients that each of us craves are specific, individual, and tailored to who we are deep down. None of the blanket rules we're handed can satisfy. True nourishment can only be found by following the map of our own desire and making friends with the very thing we fear most.

Desire is how the truth goes about revealing itself. We have full confidence in her desire, because it is our truth. And when we allow it to ride shotgun, it won't ever fail us.

When we are trapped in the consumption-based life, the one that has us perpetually spinning in the hamster wheel of acquiring stuff but never being totally happy with it, it's usually because we don't trust our desire. We prefer to play it safe and follow the rules, limit our options, order off the menu (or from the one catalog that happens to arrive unfailingly in the mail), and keep our heads buried in the sand. On a side note, if you haven't noticed, this cycle usually has unfavorable effects on our sex lives. Many men and women who are incredibly successful are frustrated with the kind of sex they are having. And, understandably so. Sexuality is not a game that can be played by the rules, penciled into your calendar, or circumscribed by prissy expectations—even though we typically burden our sex with all of those things. Sexuality exists in a desire-based world. You can't get aroused by someone who is not attractive to you simply because you think you should be. Desire is the only currency of record. It doesn't matter if you make a six-figure salary and drive the right car; if you're not letting your desire lead, you're not going to get a single drop of deep pleasure out of sex. You may get a good, productive, sexual "work-out" for your resume, but true enjoyment will remain elusive.

Desire is an impulse. It is the feeling you have when it first comes to the surface, before it gets censored by your mind or your conditioning or the laundry list of "shoulds" and "should nots" that you've been making since you were "old enough to know better." Desire is not ruled by the inner teacher—or the inner mom, for that matter. It arises spontaneously and knows where it wants to go. And it goes there, as long as you let it.

Life is a game of choice. We have infinite options available to us at any given time. So why do we feel so confined, so choiceless? Part of the reason is that if we truly opened ourselves up to all the choices in the universe, we'd get overwhelmed. But the truth is,

desire is not only not deterred by the full menu, it prefers it. Desire is an innate intelligence, an urge to move in one direction over all the other directions available. While the mind dithers, desire knows. In this way, it's the real you coming through. It's your essence, the elemental part of you that really knows what you want and—more importantly—what you need. It arises from beyond the decision-making mind. It does not hash out the pros and the cons. It doesn't take into consideration what your best friend would do in the same situation. It just knows. It zeros in on exactly the nutrients you need, and asks for them.

If you think about it, desire is the fuel that keeps life going. Michael Pollan writes in *The Botany of Desire* about the centrality of desire in the natural world. Desire, he reminds us, is what draws the bee towards the flower. The bee has a hunger, and can only satiate itself through the acquisition of nectar. The nectar-producing plant, on the other hand, has a desire to propagate itself, and as such, it attempts to catch the bee's attention with an exquisite display of colors. It bats its eyes at its little suitor in order to get pollinated. When you think about desire as a driving hunger that is responsible for the survival of a species, the idea that we should be working against our own natural desire seems ludicrous. In fact, it starts to make sense to get to know our desire, to start listening to it, to hear what it has to say.

The question, then, is whether you're willing to surrender to its wisdom and follow. This might be a counterintuitive move—at least at first glance. Desire is, after all, more of an idea for most people rather than a living and embodied presence in the world we tend to move in—that is, the masculine, five-sense, daylight world of fixed habits and patterns, in which everything that occurs takes place on predictable ground, well above sea level. Desire is a vital part of our internal landscape. It seeks shelter in the watery, turbulent realm of the feminine. Its path is circuitous and labyrinthine, and it chooses detours, untaken paths, and perilous cliff edges over well-paved roads adhering to authority-stamped safety standards. The path to freedom offered by desire is feminine and deeply mysterious. It doesn't depend on our capacity to make decisions that are incumbent upon well-timed rationalization or distant theorizing. In fact, it only asks that we drop more deeply into our senses and learn to feel through the darkness in ways befitting our primitive origins. As we run our fingers along the cave walls and allow ourselves to be guided by instinct, we learn to expand to the innate logic of our bodies.

While it may seem that desire is a guide more capricious than shifting desert sands, it is important to note that desire is actually quite decisive. Let's say that out of nowhere, you get a craving for a slow-drip coffee from the café that just opened down the street. On your way over, you run into an old friend you haven't seen in years and end up enjoying a two-hour conversation with him. By the end of those two hours, you've completely forgotten your coffee craving, but because of the fierce nature of your initial desire, your more deeply felt need for connection has been nourished. There's a certain synchronicity—being in the right place at just the right time—that follows desire wherever it goes. Desire's unspoken causality is such that when you learn to trust it, the deepest and hungriest parts of you end up getting fulfilled, regardless of whether or not

that was your intention to begin with. And that's one of the awesome things about desire: once you allow it to guide you, be prepared to be taken on a journey that, while it may lack an easily identifiable trajectory, will always lead you to what it is you most need. And it's not about acquiring what you want by inference or having the right data to lead you there—it's about trusting yourself, trusting the process, and opening up to the adventure that is sure to follow.

The crux of the problem: confusing desire with fixation. So let's get one thing straight. Desire isn't the new pair of Christian Louboutin stilettos that'll make your calves look stellar, or the awesome new iEverything that Apple just rolled out. Desire is the urge itself—a wanting. We usually then pair it up with an object—shopping, food, sex, you name it. Oftentimes, we'll find our desire to be a free-floating sensation without any particular destination in mind, meaning that our desire has announced itself but doesn't yet have an object to glom onto. We just know we want to buy something. We head over to Nordstroms. We see a sweater in the store window, and hallelujah, suddenly the previously free-floating desire has landed. The skies open up, the angels start to sing—our desire has found its object of fixation. And now, we must have that sweater!

In the moment, it feels like that sweater jumped out at us and caused our desire. But if we can slow things down, we start to recognize that the desire was there beforehand, waiting for the right object to land on. When we can learn how to separate the energy of desire from its object, we see that desire is telling us something. It's our deeper self calling us with a message, telling us where our life wants to go.

The idea that desire is the ultimate cause of suffering arises from this fundamental confusion that has us fixating on the object rather than allowing the energy of the desire to move us and lead us. The real culprit in human suffering is not desire but one of its imposters: fixation. When we believe that desire is caused by its object, only that particular object will do. Nothing else appeals to us. Nothing else has the power to delight us. We become single-minded and inflexible in our obsession with acquiring it. If we are severely fixated, we may end up harming ourselves, others, or even the object itself with the forcefulness of our grasping. We forget that we ourselves have cast the spell that is enchanting us, that we ourselves gave the object the power it seems to wield. All of the hazards that we view as bedfellows to desire—over-indulgence, craving, addiction, obsession, exploitation, greed—can be traced to this fundamental misunderstanding.

In believing that desire is caused by its object, we endow the object with power. When we do that, we experience desire as a kind of anxiety. Taking possession of the object is our best solution to getting rid of the anxiety. Quite often, possession gets rid of the desire as well. Once the object is under our control, it no longer has the power over us that was the very source of its allure. Indifferent to what we have attained, we start the cycle all over again with some new object of desire—which can often reinvigorate our anxiety rather than allow us to relish the beauty and enjoyability of our desires minus the need to clamp down on them.

But let's face it—feeling an unexpected pang of desire is a lot easier if we can ultimately corral it via an excursion to the sales rack at Nordstrom's. Fixating on the object becomes a way to make our lives a little more manageable and predictable, given the uncompromising nature and incalculability of desire (i.e., “For some inexplicable reason, I'm getting all these cues from the universe that I should quit my job and move to Bali and become a yoga teacher, but that's absolutely crazy and unfeasible, so I'll go to Lululemon and buy a pair of yoga pants that make my ass look great.”). Looking at our lives through this kind of tunnel vision may be safe, but at bottom, we know that it keeps our field of possibility colorless and narrow. When we're operating from orgasm, we never reduce the potency of our desire to an object that will make us feel better about ourselves. This is because we respects desire as a tremendous force that can launch us firmly into our lives and give us exactly what we need if we allow it to.

Like we've said before, desire is rooted in mystery. It requires us to put on a blindfold and be led by something greater than our intellect. But of course, we come pre-programmed with the “need” to know what's going to happen next. In the wild, unpredictability is dangerous; and being the animals that we are, we still want to have a sense of control over our world. But control is the first cousin of predictability. And we all know how exciting a predictable life—not to mention sex life—can be.

Making desires rigid becomes a way to assume control, but if you look at your life closely, you'll see that it doesn't follow a clear or controlled route. At some point, you have to get in touch with what it is you really want. Reaching for the second, third, or fourth cookie might be a reflex, a habit, but when you get under that, you begin to recognize that focusing on food becomes a way of training yourself not to go for the things you really want: intimacy and connection with other people, perhaps. Making food the center of your life can become a way of avoiding your loneliness, of not getting the true desire met.

When you're turned on, you're connected to your desire because you want to reclaim it in the name of all that is genuinely good and true. Desire has been beleaguered by the battering ram of harsh religious and cultural doctrines for thousands of years, particularly with respect to women. Our seductive curves, erratic emotional landscapes, enigmatic and nocturnally regulated reproductive systems, and life-giving, pleasure-producing bodies have been wrongly aligned with suffering and sin rather than the most delicious and divinely mysterious forces in existence. But curtailing desire has the unfortunate effect of stunting capacities that are closely related to it: ambition, imagination, and joie de vivre. If we could really succeed in eliminating desire, nothing new would get created—and nobody would get born.

Desire sets out on a full tank, and stops along the way for reinforcements. I was recently on an airplane, and was seated next to a gorgeous woman, tall and thin, with the ease and grace of Jackie O. We got to talking, and she told me she'd had an experience recently that had changed her life. She'd just celebrated her 51st birthday. One night, she was sitting on her comfy sofa in the living room watching TV, when out of the blue it hit her that she was likely through with more than half her life. As soon as this moment dawned,

another realization followed on its heels. “I want to move from a consumption-based life,” she thought, “to a creative life.” At the moment it popped into her head, she had no idea what it meant. She was from Boston, she said, and they don’t have thoughts like that in Boston! But it felt like an old friend had hopped in the passenger seat of her car, announcing that it was coming with her for the rest of the ride. She just shrugged her shoulders and continued to drive.

Over the next few weeks her interest in television waned. “I realized I didn’t want my life to be judged by how much trivia I knew about Law and Order,” she said. She started to notice how much of her time she had previously spent passively taking things in. Now, she began to take an interest in what she was putting out. She began noticing how she was doing things, how her hand moved as she folded the laundry, the way she scanned the list in the grocery store. The most stunning realization was that she had always considered herself low energy, constantly exhausted, fatigued. And now, suddenly, there was a whole new vigor in her thoughts and movements. It was as if she had gone from running on empty to being full all the time. It turns out that she had plenty of energy—it’s just that before, the match somehow couldn’t stay lit. Now the fuel was burning clean and bright.

What she discovered was that the consumption-based life sees each step as the means to an end, to power or ownership or victory, or as a problem that must be solved or avoided. The primary motivation of this mindset is a feeling of lack. We never have enough; we are running on empty and are looking to our partner or our job or our children or a TV show to fill the bottomless hole we’ve dug inside of ourselves. But there is another way. The creative life the Bostonian woman was talking about is the enjoyment-driven, desire-based life. The work we choose to do, how we spend our evenings, and the sex we have with our partners are all now decided by pleasure and enjoyment. We become spontaneous, playful, creative, effortless, and our greatest joy becomes whatever is happening right now. Because we’ve followed our desire to this moment, gratification is always available. Suddenly our tank is full at all times. If all we need in order to feel joy is to let ourselves experience the joy that is here, then there is always enough. Our desire itself becomes an endless source of energy and satisfaction.

When we start living with desire in the driver’s seat, everything begins to change. We start to see all the ways in which our habits are getting in the way of actually living. All the rules we’ve been taught—fake it till you make it, win at any cost, suck it up, never give up—are effective if you want to get ahead in the material world (which tells you that the only thing that can really fulfill you is another object sitting pretty in your closet, or languishing glamorously in your garage) at any cost. But the world of enjoyment has an entirely different set of rules. It’s like you’ve moved from the Northern to the Southern hemisphere—you’re 180 degrees away from where you previously started. And because turn-on is a source that is constantly self-generating and infinite, it ensures that the conditions of your life don’t become the precursors of your decisions or the mandates that determine how happy you are going to be. Your own sense of pleasure and

enjoyment is the fuel that drives you forward, and the souvenirs that you pick up on the side of the road along the way are just an added bonus.

Behind every fear is a desire. In order to get through to our desire, we just have to see that it's waiting on the other side of fear. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote: "Our deepest fears are like dragons guarding our deepest treasure."

In most cases, we fear what we most desire. Another way of putting this: when we encounter an intense fear in our lives—fear of committing to a partner, fear of getting that incredible high-profile job that will double our salary but also our responsibilities, fear of falling flat on our faces chasing a passion that can often appear to be little more than a pipe dream—on the other side of it is usually an intense desire.

Just to be clear, while the two are constantly confused as being identical, desire is not the same thing as fear, although it can augur similar effects. The feeling of butterflies in our stomach and turn-on suffusing the body can often be mistaken for the fight-or-flight fear response that has adrenaline cascading like lava through our veins. Turn-on is often experienced as a state of dynamic tension, of pleasurable anticipation. But while the effect of turn-on is one that gradually and gracefully opens us up to the subtleties and wide spectrum of sensation in our lives, fear keeps us at the brink of that discovery, often because we don't feel that we are large enough to fully receive and hold our desire.

Fear and desire are interconnected for various reasons. For one, desire gets its feelings hurt very easily. When it encounters disapproval, rejection, or frequent frustration, it tends to go into hiding. In women, especially, the desire for orgasm has often met with more discouragement than it can tolerate. Masculine sexual desire is generally robust enough to withstand quite a lot of adversity, but in women, this desire tends to be more delicate. When it takes fright, it can flee to a place so deep and distant that for all intents and purposes it appears to have been extinguished for good.

The line between fear and desire is so thin that, similar to neighboring ecosystems, it only takes the subtlest temperature change to move from one to the other. Think of it this way: if fear is experienced at 51% and desire is at 49%, the prevailing force that will guide your life (or more accurately, paralyze you in place) will be fear. But a simple nudge from desire can have a surprisingly conciliatory effect. A mere 2% shift in desire's favor can be enough to have you jettison your inhibitions and move from a place of turn-on and healthy inquisitiveness rather than anxiety.

Thankfully, there's a way to allow ourselves to walk towards our desire, even if it's flanked by fear. And that is through play. When we play with our fears, a world that once appeared shadowy and dangerous begins to reveal its charms and particularities. While fear locks us firmly in place, the tendency toward play can enable us to walk with certainty and aplomb through the gates of fear and into the lush garden of our desire. And you can feel the difference in your body. The effect is one of expansion rather than contraction. Fear is intent on keeping you small, but desire is expansive and equipped

with a natural curiosity. This takes us back to the idea of desire being distinct from fixation. When you desire a particular object, you awaken to the desirability of other objects that have the same qualities. You begin to notice how the world abounds in whatever quality you have fallen in love with. The particular opens and expands into the universal. Even if you can't have what you originally wanted, desiring it has made you richer and larger than you were before—whereas fear of losing our grip on what we already have or being unable to open up to something new has us desperately clinging to the known parameters of our world like a life raft.

The more accustomed you become to recognizing your desire, the more adept you will be in moving towards pleasure rather than anxiety. A woman in one of my workshops announced to me recently, “I don't have a problem with fear. In fact, I tend to stay outside my comfort zone a lot and do things that I normally wouldn't. But I don't think it's helping, because I'm not getting the results I want and I'm not happy in my life.”

It's one thing to open up to your fear and consider that your deepest desire is waiting on the other side, but we are less interested in ploughing through our discomforts like an unstoppable juggernaut, just for the hell of it, than we are in simply moving toward our desires without creating needless obstacles along the way. And although considering your fears can be a wonderful exercise in identifying your desires, there is an easier and more deliberate way to expand your capacity to feel: put yourself in situations you want to be in, situations that may seem intimidating at first but will crank out more juice and add sweetness to your life. While a life of turn-on can willingly embrace any circumstance the powers that be throw at us, the “no pain, no gain” mentality is usually a shoddy excuse that keeps us constantly striving and ultimately depleted. We know that pleasure expands our bandwidth and fuels our power far more than fear ever could.

The cycle of desire: know what you want, ask for it, receive it, be grateful—and do it all over again. “I'm open to considering the possibility of maybe starting to follow my desire,” a client often says at the point at which she is finally starting to come into his or her orgasm. “But now that you mention it, I can't remember the last time I saw it. How am I supposed to find it again?”

So the good news is that you're considering re-engaging with your desire. Your mind is ready to conduct an informational interview. Fabulous. The bad news is that for all you know, your desire is hiding out in a cave on the Afghan-Pakistani border. You haven't encountered the darn thing in years.

Have you ever seen a room of toddlers when suddenly someone turns on the music? Without needing to be told, they understand that music means move. They respond intuitively, with the desire to jump, bounce, and flail wildly. Ask any child under the age of five if they know how to dance, and they will look at you like you've got a screw loose. Of course they know how to dance. Doesn't everybody?

We start off in life in a similar relationship to desire. We don't need to be taught what we want—we simply know we want something. You see a puddle, and you jump into it! Why wouldn't you? You want the splash. You want the feeling of floating through the air and landing. You want to watch the effect your galoshes have on the calm surface of the water. You don't care if you are wearing your white tights and your church skirt, and the puddle is muddy. You just know you want to jump. But you were probably civilized by a harsh rebuke from Mom and the message that following that irrational urge to get dirty and play made you a bad girl. We internalize the message early on and learn to domesticate the wild beast of desire, only grudgingly entertaining her rampant appetite from time to time. As a result, we often are at a loss as to what we truly want, and even if a genie popped out of a lamp and granted us three wishes, we might be hard pressed to say what would tickle our fancy the most.

So if we want to coax our desire out again, we must learn how to walk steadily into the unknown. Getting clear on what we want is like upping the ante in slow gradations. Say you're a fan of crossword puzzles—you might start off with the easiest puzzles. But soon you're going to master the first level, and you are going to start getting curious about how you'd perform with something a little bit harder. So you dip a toe in. You get excited by the new challenge, and it lasts for a few weeks. Soon you're ready to upgrade again. The key is to take it slowly so you can build trust one inch at a time. Same goes for desire. You start following it where it wants to go, little by little. Feel it take you to the edge of the unknown. You might need to dip back into old patterns and take cover in familiar shelter. But once you regain equilibrium, you can walk back out into the water and explore a little more.

Unsurprisingly, if you're not really sure what you want, sex can feel like an overwhelming place to start. I've noticed with men and women in the initial stages of exploring orgasm that they may find even ostensibly minor desires are unattainable for practical reasons, or perhaps feel forbidden for some mysterious psychological reason. She might love to get a massage, but she truly can't afford it, or she might fear feeling so guilty about spending the money that she wouldn't be able to enjoy the massage anyway. When that happens, she can look for an easily attainable desire that has the same quality. If she can't treat herself to a massage, perhaps she can opt for a bubble bath. Actually, being obliged to make substitutions like this is a good thing because it loosens up fixation and our rigid expectations. We can learn to start seeing desire in terms of qualities rather than objects. All manner of specific objects may be out of reach, but qualities (for instance, beauty, or joy, or laughter) are always attainable.

If a substitution doesn't satisfy, you probably haven't been precise enough about the quality you are after. For instance, if the quality you want is relaxation, a long soak in the tub can work just as well as a massage. But maybe what you really want from a massage is the quality of being lovingly attended to by another person. In that case, you could substitute having your hair shampooed, or going to one of those restaurants where the waitress keeps refilling your coffee cup for free. The important thing is to honor

whatever quality proposes itself to you as a desire, and to make a movement towards getting it—simply by asking for it and allowing yourself the permission to have it.

Orgasmic desire that has gone into hiding may be guarded by a lot of fears. It may be that you can't even form a realistic picture of its satisfaction that isn't hedged by worries. You can picture being captured by sexy pirates, but not undressing in front of an actual man who is going to see your cellulite. Full-blown desire is undaunted by such concerns. If you can't imagine getting past them, your desire is probably still unripe and content to linger on the topmost bough. Be patient. Make friends with whatever small part of it is ready to come out of hiding and drop to the forest floor. Give it the imaginary pirates if that is all it can handle right now. The most important thing to do at this point is to begin to nurture your desire by nourishing yourself with what is immediately available to you. As you begin to take it in and allow yourself to receive it with gratitude and acceptance, you begin to create an even larger receptive capacity that will enable you to venture into new, potentially scary terrain.

You can help clients with this by asking them to make a list of everyday turn-ons—things that engage and enliven them, and bring them joy. What items on that list have they been depriving themselves of lately? Ask them to start treating themselves to some little experience that turns them on on every day. It can be as trivial as wearing the shirt they've been saving for a special occasion, or taking 15 minutes off to people-watch while sipping an espresso. They should savor the turn-on and notice what happens in their body as they do so; then they stay with it until a feeling of gratitude washes over them. Ask them to be grateful to the desire itself for leading them to this place of enjoyment. Gratitude is how we console desire that has experienced getting its feelings hurt. Feeling fully appreciated, even in a very small way, encourages it to come out of hiding.

Once we become intimately acquainted with our deepest desires, it becomes easier to not get caught up in distracting surface manifestations and glittery objects that tempt us away from the ultimate turn-on. For example, when you find yourself rooted in your desire to experience love, you can more easily bypass people who are clearly not going to give it to you. On the other hand, if you find yourself consistently pursuing someone who is incapable of giving you what it is you most want, you might ask if you are being honest with yourself, or if you're fixating on your love object in an attempt to circumvent the danger of confronting your raw desire.

Begin by coming back to your body. Feel a desire in the present tense—not as an idea but as a truth that is alive in your flesh. Feeling a desire is something that always occurs in the present tense: that is, a desire is felt in the moment of stating it. It is a palpable, unmistakable physical ache that courses through the body, through your pussy or cock.

Luckily for you, your desire is always close to home. In fact, it's right here, right now, in your very own body. Your body knows what it wants. It knows when it's hungry, when it wants to fuck and whom, when it wants to move and when it wants to be still. It also knows how it wants to be spending its time—what kind of work it wants to be doing, what

kind of people it wants to be surrounded by, how it wants to be treated by its partner. This knowledge is the blueprint of our lives, and it's encoded in our very cells. It might look radically different from what your laundry list of expectations has ordained, since desire doesn't obediently kowtow to a litany of must-haves. As you become more acquainted with your deepest desire, you will come to appreciate its liberal nature, its fullness and grandeur—which will enable you to take pleasure in a number of objects and experiences without diluting the quality your desire ultimately seeks.

Allowing and moving with your desire is both glaringly obvious and, accordingly, extremely difficult: it means allowing your desire to literally move you. Our usual conception of moving goes something like this: a.) Desire to be somewhere. b.) Decide to go there. c.) Tell your body to move. But seeing desire as a visceral entity rather than a mere concept means that when you let your desire move you, there is no sense of causality or a linear progression of steps. Movement and desire co-arise together. You discover what you desire at the very moment you find yourself gravitating toward it.

Again, if allowing desire to spontaneously bubble up to the surface sounds too overwhelming or counterintuitive, you can begin by acting on small impulses. Say you're in a public place and you are admiring a stranger who crops up in your field of vision. You like their smile, or their outfit, or some endearing gesture of theirs that you witness. You sort of feel like telling them so, even though you don't have a real "reason." When your mind asks, "Should I offer them the compliment or not?" simply respond, "Yes, you should." And then go do it.

While this is a good place to start because it's a low-risk impulse, it is a profound activity, as it lets you practice the art of cultivating and expressing turn-on when desire manifests in your body and your attention. In many ways, desire is simply doing that which before was only done by conscious intention and deliberation. It may feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar at first, but as yoga practitioners will tell you, building a steady practice is all about clocking time on the mat. Soon enough, you will notice that you are acting on your orgasm (and spreading it to the people in your environment) without any forethought at all.

This is a critical point; because self-deception is one of the byproducts of the intellect, learning how to feed your true hunger is all about paying attention to what your body is trying to tell you. For example, things like over-exertion and overeating typically result when we choose to tune out or disparage the signals that our body is constantly transmitting to let us know what it needs. The body naturally knows when it is satiated or in need of nutrients. You can begin to connect with your body by considering the number of times in a day that you deny your impulses, either by unconscious habit or the internalized message that mind should be exalted over matter. Note that following the impulse to drink a glass of water if your body feels dehydrated can be qualitatively quite different from following the impulse to do some online shopping when work gets tiresome or stressful. Which impulses arise from ideas and object fixation rather than tangible sensations that you feel in your body?

The shifting inventory of desire enables room for expansion and a little ordering of the shelves every now and then. As we know, desire is something that is circuitous and changing—so how can we reconcile this with living in the world? How rigid must our desires be?

This is where determining the magnitude of our desires comes in handy. For the most part, we can separate desires into three categories, from weakest to strongest: a) desires that are anchored in particulars, as well as fleeting fancies and transient sentiments; b) Little D desires; and c) Big D desires.

Big D desires are desires with enormous magnitude—they usually point to a state of feeling and being, which is quite different from a craving for a piece of chocolate or a vacation to a tropical island. The state of urgency and recurrence can give us a big clue as to whether what we are seeking is a craving based on empty calories (i.e., what we've been trained to ask for, want, and expect) or something infinitely larger and less predictable. Big D desire is unbridled, as it is the desire of our deepest calling. It is the destination we are aiming for: freedom, power, wisdom, and love. It is the vehicle to our most realized version of self. It is the key to our very largesse. As we set out on the road, our Big D desire is the giant sign that tells us, "This is where we are headed." When we get lost or sidetracked, our Big D desire, which can make itself known as the still voice within us or a gobsmacking from the universe, acts as a beacon that calls us back to our original purpose. We could say that Big D desires give us information regarding the orientation of our feminine.

Sometimes, however, we tend to get stuck on our Little D desires, which tend to be more fixed and specific, and are simply guideposts to our Big D desires. These are, by definition, subject to change. While Big D is a clear explication of how we want to feel, Little D offers us the mundane details on how we can get there. These are essentially the tools we need to attain the feeling states offered by Big D. They include all the things we'll want to pack in our suitcase as we head out on our journey, as well as the map of how we'll get there (although we must be assiduous when it comes to not confusing the map with the territory). Little D desires give us the seemingly minor, yet always salient, bits of information—things like time, location, numbers, dollars, and people. The more specific we are with our Little D desires (which tend to be masculine-oriented in their attention to results), the easier it will be to determine whether or not we're on the right path. However, Little D can sometimes become an end in itself, causing people to be stymied along their path to fulfillment. But as long as our masculine (Little D) is constantly working to recalibrate itself in service of the feminine (Big D), we can begin to reconcile our seemingly capricious hankerings with our truest and deepest yearnings.

Levels of Desire (A Woman's Relationship to Her Desire)

1. Lack of Belief

At this level, a woman simply doesn't believe she has any desire. This is largely based on the concept that desire is bad, that she wants too much, that selflessness is more noble than reaching for what she most yearns. There is a certain ubiquitous sense of resignation you will find in women who are stymied by their disbelief. She usually sublimates her deepest desires in things that are culturally acceptable. You might hear them say things like "I have no desire for sex, and I'm okay with that," "I wish I wanted sex more often, but I just don't," "I get so much satisfaction from being a great mom—what more could I want?"

2. Lack of Access

In this stage, a woman feels her desire lurking somewhere in the background, but she can't access it, no matter what she tries. She is usually in the middle of some kind of self-actualization process that never comes to fruition, usually because she gives up along the way. You might hear her say something like, "I'm working on self-love. I feel a spark sometimes, but [fill in a reason] so I don't even try. I mean, why bother?"

3. Lack of Voice

Here, a woman is able to access her desire, but she cannot speak it or make the request that is necessary for its fulfillment. She feels her desire, but she still has the nagging feeling that it isn't right or acceptable. The reasons not to act on it feel too overwhelming. There is a sense of disconnection from the very thing that could fuel her orgasm, and it's shrouded in layers of excuses. You might hear spiel such as: "My vibrator does me better than any partner possibly could," "I'm very picky, and there's no one I'm particularly interested in," or "If he knew how I feel, I'd just die."

4. Lack of Receptivity

At this level, a woman can make a request, but she sabotages its fulfillment. These self-defeating patterns emerge from the idea that a gratified desire must be earned, or that the deferral of pleasure is good. In many ways, the obstacles to fulfillment at this level are self-generated and create a sense of numbness. A woman sets herself up for failure by dismissing her deepest hunger, even setting up situations in which she can purposely avoid gratification. She might say things like, "I have zero time and energy to do it—it just feels like another burden," "You wouldn't believe how my day has been! Do you still want to? 'Cause I'd understand if you didn't...", "He was great, but in between work, night classes, and holidays with my parents, it just didn't work out."

5. Lack of Gratitude

At this level, a woman can receive but cannot acknowledge or be grateful for what she is getting. It is as if she is inhaling a plate of food without stopping to relish what she's tasting or appreciate how good it is. Her hunger is so steadfast and fierce that there is

little sense that it will ever be truly gratified, so it assumes a numb, unappreciative, resentful, bottomless persona. The following sentiments are common to someone who hasn't experienced gratitude: "That's it?" "No, it's not the exact one I wanted," "Yes, I know, you kept going for three hours, but I didn't go over—that's all I'm saying," or the most common: "It's not you, it's me."

6. Lack of Fulfillment

At this stage, a woman can express gratitude, but she is unable to recognize or admit when she is full. She has long-standing scarcity-based habits that don't fit the current circumstances of abundance. Long periods of going without are contained in her cellular memory. She's unaccustomed to the abundance, and her internal mechanisms haven't caught up or acclimated to it yet. She might express this lack of a gauge with statements like, "I'm going to need a bigger closet and a reason to wear all these clothes at some point," "I don't think any man will ever truly meet my needs," "Okay, a little to the left, harder, softer, no—back a little bit," "I can't tell you how much this means to me—my last boyfriend broke up with me because of it."

7. Lack of Reciprocity

At this level, a woman is grateful for her bounty, but she is unable to let it pour forth from her as a form of generosity. This is typically due to the absence of agency, power, and connection to spirit. She feels a growing sense of tumescence and tightness, which causes tension in her life. Meanwhile, full has slowly transformed into stuffed. She's reached a point where the only relief she will get will come from spilling over, bursting forth, allowing her cup to run over onto others. She's reached that place but is not yet conscious of it, because of how unfamiliar it is. Her mounting irritation often results in anger or sickness: "I knew there was going to be a hidden cost in this bill!", "I have no idea why I got the flu right in the middle of our vacation," "Don't pressure me! You don't have to say anything, I can feel it!"

8. Generosity

At this level, a woman has alchemized her desire and made it into something more meaningful; she is able to digest pleasure fully and put it back out in the world. She is finally ready to give, since she has something to give. Because she is so full, her system will ensure that she will never feel depleted, and that giving will not result in resentment or expectation. It will be done for the sheer joy of the act. She has taken the world in with pure hunger, and is now converting those nutrients into love, sending that back out into the world. A woman at this level does not distinguish between her own pleasure and the pleasure she gives others. This often looks like unbounded, unabashed cocklust. She can't get enough: she wants to fuck it, suck it, stroke it, smell it, see it glisten, make it medium hard, super-hard, open her throat wider, feel it in her pussy more deeply. She has a strong desire for other women to experience what she has. She responds to "Thank you," which she hears quite often, with "Thank you," and genuinely means it. She is unafraid of showing her love and may even risk pushing her man's edges, given the amount of love she effortlessly pours onto him, which comes from her own sense of abundance and not from neediness or lack. She has the uncanny ability to feel others so

deeply that she gets off on other people's turn-on. In fact, other people's turn-on and get-off is one of the most gratifying things she has felt, and she is driven to bring others along for the ride. In this place, everything gratifies, because she is able to convert everything the universe offers into nutrients.

Levels of Desire: The Focus of Desire

Desire is the sensation that moves us to meet our needs; it is a filter through which we see objects that we perceive will meet those underlying needs. More importantly, it is the primal energy that propels us forward. The fulfillment of desire requires us to be in touch with six primary qualities: hunger, safety, danger, love, flow, and spirit. These filters determine our sense of gratification in our lives. When our needs meet with one or more filters, you get certain predictable results. For example, in our culture, a realized man tempers hunger with love, and a realized woman ignites love with hunger.

1. Hunger

Hunger undergirds the desire for pure power and drive. While hunger without a sense of spirit and purpose tends to be acted out in violent ways, spirit without this underlying hunger results in impotence and unrealized goals. For many of us, the sensation of being stuffed yet not at all close to satiated is what we could describe as hunger. Accompanied by a sense of ruthlessness or fumbling urgency, the need to feed oneself can, paradoxically, result in greater hunger. The problem, however, isn't that you want too much, it's that you are reaching for the wrong antidotes; ultimately, what nourishes the hungry person isn't what you think will appease your appetite. Hunger is raw unsheathed power and moves with force. The absence of hunger always makes us feel bland and powerless, as if we are in an automatic default state of apathy. Without hunger, we will never have the capacity to step outside the known world of our wanting. Among most American women, the shut-down of hunger due to our exaltation of "up" (that is, the transcendent, abstract realm of goals and ideas, and its tendency toward renunciation) and our dismissal of "down" (that is, the realm of pure sensation, body awareness, the tangible space of the here and now) keeps us in a state of arrested development when it comes to sex. All sex is violation because those in this state haven't reached the metaphorical age of consent, meaning they have no volitional power behind their sex. So when men complain that women don't feel sexual or express desire nearly enough, they must recognize that this seeming absence of hunger comes from the false dichotomy our culture has created: exalting the "good" and diminishing darkness.

2. Safety

The purpose of the safety filter is to act as a yoke that calibrates our lift-off to ensure safe return, to mediate the power of hunger. It's very helpful in that it enables you to develop a solid relationship with yourself. The key to continuing to the next several layers of desire in this stage is the realization that no object can fulfill our hunger. Safety enables people to temper the tendency to fill ourselves with another. Without safety, you will feel as if you have violated your own boundaries. You are possessed, out of control, and weak. In

general, a woman cannot open to the involuntary if she feels unsafe, so being in touch with our sense of safety is a way of being in integrity with the soft, vulnerable parts of ourselves that require vigilance and protection.

3. Danger

The purpose of the danger filter is to move us outside of our known boundaries. The experience of erotic surrender happens in the gap between what we know and do not know. The presence of danger produces passion by introducing four obstacles: ambivalence, power, yearning, and breaking rules.

The combination of hunger, safety, and danger is much like having children with a lot of pent-up energy but no outlet. This is where we find ourselves behaving in erratic and inexplicable ways; for example, we consider ourselves monogamous but indulge in illicit affairs, or we see ourselves as innocent but have the secret desire for someone to hit us. This is the realm of taboo and secrets, and without love and acceptance of one's desires, all of your actions feel compulsive and unconscious.

4. Love

The purpose of love is to receive, meld, and emanate all of the aforementioned qualities. Love is the product of the union of polarities; it is the below and the above coming together. Without the presence of both masculine and feminine, light and dark, grounded and cosmic, volition and surrender, love has no agency or authority. When hunger, safety, danger, and love commingle, you can approve of whatever desire you may have. Your humanity is acknowledged as essentially good, which means that you are able to consider your needs in all their totality and complexity. The absence of love is the absence of meaning. It is achievement without fulfillment, it is proficiency over pleasure, it is the idea that we can "act" our way through life. Love is the element that most American men are missing. So when we exalt a kind of stoicism in men, even unconsciously, we need to recognize that they are being told essentially to shut love down. The toxic substitute for love can be found in the quintessential nice new age guy, who is operating on the basis of performance rather than genuine love.

5. Turn-on (or Flow)

The purpose of turn-on is to add levity to the act of attainment; it's similar to the difference between pleasure and enjoyment. Its primary qualities are timelessness, a loss of one's narrow grip on self and identity, and intensified focus. In other words, turn-on provides the fuel to accomplish something for the sheer joy of doing it, not for any other purpose or goal. There is a quality of effortlessness about it, even in the midst of what might appear to be tremendous exertion, because there is no resistance. Because desire leads the way, your yoke feels easy, your burden light. You are compelled to do what you are doing as kids in play are compelled to run, climb, wrestle, chase, shriek, laugh. And while turn-on loves to do things, it is blissfully oblivious to the possibility of failure, disappointment, or embarrassment. If it can't do well what it loves to do, it is perfectly happy to do it badly. Turn-on sings loudly, even when it is singing off key. Don't be fooled, though, by its seemingly frivolous ways. Nothing could be more vitally important than turn-on. Desire brought us into being and continually draws us back to

the source of our being. Having first given us life, it ever afterwards serves as a divining rod, leading us toward that which sustains us, and away from that which is deadening. By merging action with awareness and attention, we can enable turn-on to become our true north. Hunger plus safety plus danger plus love plus flow integrates desire with action. The key element is an ignition that moves you forward as if moonwalking—seemingly floating, moving without visible effort or propulsion.

6. Spirit

Spirit is that unconditional connection which instills in us a natural sense of altruism and wanting to give. It is spirit that keeps hunger from steering toward violence or destruction. Spirit is an expansiveness that has you feel bigger than the boundaries of your own body. Without consciously thinking about it you might find yourself using first-person “I” and mean I-humanity or I-the planet or I-that-person-over-there. Spirit is that which pseudo-spirituality is aiming for but missing. Merging the poles of hunger and spirit leads to valuable insight. The vital combination of hunger, safety, danger, love, flow, and spirit creates a portal through which you can enter the involuntary, that place of the unknown, with a joyous anticipation of what is possible, not what is comfortable. It takes you out of the realm of pure ideals and into a grounded exploration of your life.

Section 7: Communication and Metamessages

Being in a state of orgasm means you have the capacity to fundamentally change the way we look at communication between men and women—the way we look at communication, period. Rather than leveling unilateral judgments that cleave to pre-made ideas of how men and women are supposed to be (e.g., “All men are perverts,” “All women are crazy”), we learn to deep-dive into the metamessage of what he or she is saying—the subtext that lingers below the surface of language, reasons, justifications, stories. That’s the level at which all the things we think we know swiftly unravel.

As far as communication between the sexes goes, one aspect to take into account is that men see themselves as individuals in a hierarchical social order, while women view themselves as individuals in a network of social connections. Navigating these two different perspectives means that communication has to, in the words of Steven Pinker, accomplish two things: convey content and negotiate a relationship type.

When it comes down to it, women are bilingual. While society demands that they be fluent in Masculine, Feminine is their native tongue. They usually use Masculine to communicate with men because men are not bilingual. This is a mutual standoff; men won’t learn Feminine and women won’t train them. Men reject female communication because it isn’t production-oriented. Our society has this generally accepted notion that women are “crazy”—at least when measured by the exacting masculine standards of logic and problem-solving, Feminine makes little sense. On the flip side, women privately and sometimes publicly believe that men are dumb and one-dimensional, not to mention painfully obtuse.

In coming to the neutral middle ground that communication requires of us, men need to learn to turn off the production-oriented brain—the brain that talks and thinks and lives and breathes in Masculine—because it simply isn’t the right tool for relationships. Feminine communication—which is multidimensional and communicates on various levels, with rapid switches and a sophisticated attention to nuance—is much better suited to man/woman relating. It isn’t just talking about emotion; it evokes emotion, transmits sensations, and elicits feelings. It’s a bit like music in this way. Unlike dance, or painting, or a novel, which can depict or describe an emotion such as sadness or happiness, music somehow reaches directly into the listener and evokes emotion from within. Feminine is like this. Speaking Feminine is the art of using language for the skillful exchange of packets of emotion. The problem is that we seldom do so consciously and conscientiously.

Men try to use the same language with a woman that they use for business deals and car repair, and then they find themselves scratching their heads—wondering why it’s working so poorly. Meanwhile, the part of the brain that truly knows, that has all the answers and wisdom necessary to relate with women, remains dormant and silent as

long as men choose to stay in their rational, analytical, problem-solving heads. But at the same time, women are just as blind to the arrogance of their refusal to teach as men are to the arrogance of their refusal to learn. Women don't believe that men don't know; they think men do know and are deliberately ignoring the obvious.

Men are, in a sense, doubly blind. The truth is that they are operating from their emotions as often as not. But language shapes thought, and because Masculine has little or no language for emotion, they honestly believe they are acting logically. For example, a man who "doesn't believe in jealousy" will honestly believe that he isn't jealous, and he can't see that his behavior indicates otherwise. To men, this makes men look like, at best, really bad liars. Here he is, with his emotions obviously in the driver's seat directing his actions, while his "cortex," which is where he's living most of the time, provides an internal dialogue, back-rationalizing everything.

In response, women manipulate men by using a language that sounds like Masculine in conversations that are really about emotions. Believing that men are pretending, women pretend right back. Men end up confused because they aren't aware of the game, and women end up frustrated because they aren't aware that men aren't playing the game they think they are.

The alternative to such crossed wires looks a bit like verbal stroking: using language in a way that resembles strokes in an OM. Getting there requires both partners' participation but it can be ignited by unwavering willingness: his willingness to learn, or her willingness to teach, to expose all her own games. At this point, he may experience litost—the sting of a kind of humiliating regret, like the missionary going into the jungle with lofty goals and discovering the natives' beliefs and way of life to be more compelling than the religion he has come to spread. At first, he may slip into analyzing and creating formulas without even realizing that he's doing it—until he gradually becomes conscious of how often he does it. Over time, the connections between his feeling brain and his consciousness are built and fortified. In the meantime, she may experience the new frustration of responsibility. After all, training someone to handle your ass feels a lot like handling them. It may feel like more work than it's actually worth. She may feel like she's showing her hand, revealing all her secrets. It may feel too explicit, too coarse, too overt, and painfully awkward—kind of like having to explain a joke, which tends to zap the joke of its original humor and intent. But her doing this increases his ability to give her the kind of subtle attention she is inwardly begging for. As a result, the relationship becomes fluid and both partners become bilingual, using whatever tongue is required in the moment. In this way communication becomes the lingua franca for connection.

Language creates our reality, and our reality creates our language. The problem is that the disconnect between the two is like a giant chasm. But the more our language reflects reality and vice-versa, the more fulfilled we find ourselves. The imaginary barricade between what's inside and what's outside, what's private and what's public, is finally perceived as illusory—which rids us of the need for hypocrisy and secrecy. In the same way we need to understand a language to negotiate a culture, we must be aware of all the

non-dominant (often called “pigeon”) languages that constitute majorly neglected aspects of our reality in which large pockets of the population are living.

Another problem is that language constitutes communication between two nervous systems; while we may perceive that we are transmitting immutable facts that can have an actual impact, what we are actually experiencing is nervous-system perceptions that can be altered—and that should when they are simply not beneficial or in alignment with reality. This can be as simple as changing the language that we use, opening up to more agile and creative ways of communicating—buying off the rack and going off the road, so to speak. For men and women, this communication requires a mutual surrender, particularly that in which the “higher” surrenders to the “lower” and enables a third entity to be incarnated: that of the relationship. In a relationship, when a man agrees to hold the center and a woman agrees to hold her own sex, balance can be found. But this requires that each learn how to speak the other’s language. The unresolved form of masculine self-protection/self-absorption/independence can be transformed into the exalted form of liberation, in which he willingly uses his power in service of her awakening. His anger and virtuosity can be tempered by potency and inspiration. His judgment and dismissal become discrimination; his superiority complex becomes authority with power; his lack of appreciation becomes generosity. Likewise, a woman’s fear and desire are resolved into inspired action; her resentment and complaints become fuel for change; her inferiority becomes power with authority; and her attractiveness becomes magnetism.

An obvious challenge is that anything other than Aristotelian logic is viewed as crazy, wrong, and lacking in lucidity. The problem here is that we as a culture have little access to a form of perception that is process- and sensory-oriented rather than composed of static symbols. Such a dogma perpetuates three “laws” that make the divide between Masculine and Feminine seem altogether hopeless:

1. **The law of identity.** In other words: whatever is, simply is. (This is, of course, completely antithetical to the idea of emergent behavior, wherein we believe that what we tell ourselves is true until we discover otherwise and find that we are actually quite different from our frozen concepts of ourselves.)
2. **The law of contradiction.** In other words, nothing can both be, and not be. (Such a stance precludes our perception of subtle change; we see an object or person as fixed in time and believe that we are apprehending it in its totality.)
3. **The law of the excluded third.** In other words, everything must either be, or not be. (This creates a plethora of visible and invisible others who are either friend or foe depending on our perception of them, even though ideas certainly cannot cover all that they represent.)

If we look at language and the logic that undergirds language, we run into some pretty big problems. The philosopher Alfred Korzybski was famous for noting that “the map is not the territory,” a statement that was originally made when looking at certain aberrations in thinking, such as racism, which are the result of “bad maps.” That is, they guide us

astray because we confuse the word with the thing instead of always referring back to what is real. A map is not the territory and couldn't possibly represent the entire territory; it's self-reflexive and works to confirm its own version of things rather than seek out uncharted territory and say, "Hey, isn't that interesting?" Korzybski used to actually feed people dog biscuits from a tin with a covered label, and when they would remark on how tasty the "cookies" were, only then would he reveal what he'd done. This is a powerful demonstration of how our labels preconceive and bias our experience, and also serve to take us away from the signifiers of pure sensation.

In order to be free of our own dogma, we must always be attuned to the many layers of conversation and communication. When you ask a question, for example, your overt language is that you wanted an answer to that question. That is the denotation of what you're doing (that is, the dictionary definition of any term). Then there's the connotation, which is more covert. The connotation of your question (that is, the actual meaning of what you're trying to say) might be: "I'm a good student, and I even reached for a term that I didn't know, so I should be recognized by everyone in the room." When we get to the point where we can dig below the superficial layers and come face to face with a person's metalanguage (the thing they are trying to communicate beneath the thing they are actually saying, which means that in order to get this level of comprehension, you need to be able to skillfully deconstruct language itself rather than taking it at face value), that's when we know we're getting somewhere. So for instance, if you want to move someone who says they want power, the best thing you can do is align with her metacharacter to begin to speak to that particular aspect of her that is calling the shots, so that this character (who is hidden beneath so much carefully crafted language) can be seen and heard. In speaking to that character, you could then teach the person about what it means to create powerful language.

To understand where we can find common ground, we need to understand our differences. (Please note that these are generalizations, but that doesn't mean you won't find value and truth in them.) Here are some of the key differences in the way women and men are hardwired to communicate:

1. Women are bilingual; men are monolingual.
2. For women, value is found in contribution; for men, value is externalized in a "what's in it for me" sort of way.
3. Women overly value the masculine; men concurrently despise the feminine.
4. For women, conversations are negotiations for closeness; for men, conversations are negotiations for self-protection.
5. Women seek consensus; men seek independence.
6. Women struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation; men struggle to protect themselves from others and tend to push others away in the process.
7. Women are multidimensional and tend to talk in circles, sometimes cutting out mid-sentence and moving on to a seemingly unrelated thought; men are linear and prefer for their conversations to follow a sequential order and recognizable structure.

8. The feminine insists on closeness and sameness; the masculine insists on separateness and difference.
9. In women's receptivity to help, they are framed as subordinate; in men's penchant for protection, they are framed as superior.
10. Women speak in metamessages and subtext; men speak in overt messages.
11. Women speak about their problems in order to feel closeness to others; men offer solutions to problems in order to feel their own value.
12. Women ask for assistance; men do not (and do not like to) ask for assistance.
13. Women are multiply abstract; men are singularly abstract.
14. Women tend to pick up various details and situations when they walk into a room; men are almost always focused on the object of their attention to the exclusion of the other narratives that may be unfolding in a room.
15. Women give praise and validation; men give information.
16. Women use connector language such as "yeah" and "and"; men use disjunctive language.
17. Women speak in inquiring tones; men speak in declarative tones.
18. Women's humor tends to be contextual; men's humor tends to be formulaic.
19. Women seek agreement; men seek challenge.
20. In conversation, women overlap; men interrupt.
21. Women tend to use hedging devices (which are not committed to the statement they are making) such as a rise and fall in intonation patterns, phrases such as "I mean/I think/I guess/Sort of/You know," adverbials such as "maybe/probably/relatively/generally/really" and modal verbs such as "may/might/would/could"; men tend to employ declarative devices such as the use of the word "is" and direct rather than passive voice.
22. Young girls play in small groups or in pairs, and the center of a girl's social life is a best friend. Most activities among young girls, such as jump rope, don't have winners or losers, and everyone gets a turn. Girls rarely give orders; they tend to express preferences as suggestions. There is no jockeying for status in an obvious way. They are most concerned with being liked. Young boys, however, tend to play outside in large groups that have a hierarchical structure. Their groups have a leader who tells others what to do and how to do it, and typically resist doing what other boys propose. It is by giving orders and making them stick that high status is negotiated. Another way to achieve status is to achieve center stage by telling jokes and sidetracking or challenging stories that were told by other men. Boys' games have decisive winners and losers, and elaborate systems of rules. Boys constantly boast and have an eye trained for who is the "best."

Section 8: Bringing Out the Beast

Many people who come to me wanting a better sex life or more power are completely out of touch with their truest desires. And let's face it, most of us got the memo very early on that sexual desire was something we needed to be afraid of. It was out of control, and if we allowed ourselves to be swayed by its influence, we too would become out of control. Like the full moon could turn a perfectly respectable man into a werewolf, so could sexual desire transform us into beasts who operated recklessly, with no regard for morality or the well-being of others. Sex was presented as a wily enemy to be reckoned with and kept in check.

But the passion in a relationship happens on the dark side. The erotic is opened when we break rules, play with power dynamics, feel ambivalent, and push through and yearn—with this comes instability, messiness, and confusion. Our current structure is like bricks and mortar, which collapse in the face of desire (in favor of security). In most monogamous relationships, since we want to be wanted solely, we are willing to give up our desire for others in order to set the standard for our partner's sole focus on us. Yet as our turn-on grows, so does our desire. We then believe that we either have to blow up our relationship to be fully expressed, or keep ourselves under lock and key to prevent the possible discomfort with our partner, meanwhile squashing our turn-on. If we make the leap and choose to express what's there, we enter the unpredictable domain of open desire. In this land, anything can happen. And in this land, the beast reigns supreme.

One of the signifiers of darkness is chaos. We associate chaos with darkness, but when we are in alignment with darkness, it's really not that chaotic. Chaos only happens when the artificial homunculi we've created in accordance with our ideas and ideals come into conflict with our true nature—then we call it a bad thing. I have an acquaintance who's a well-known Kabbalist and spiritual teacher. Well, he recently fucked a porn star, even though he was supposed to be Mr. Monogamy, with a wife and child. We hear about this all the time—whether we are looking at politics or yogis, people in elevated positions who are supposed to cleave to a higher ethic and to best their baseness. We call them terrible and righteously frown upon their terrible-ness. But what is really happening here is nature. And instead of admitting that our artificial constructs are just too damn artificial to abide by, that maybe we should scrutinize the laws we've created and ask ourselves how well they're working out for us, we choose to imprison ourselves in borrowed concepts and pat assumptions. We look at sex as transgression that needs to be consecrated through things like marriage, relationships, and drawing very tidily within the lines.

We say that men are the breadwinners and protectors, and women are nurturing and seek security. Most men never realize that the thing they are protecting women from, this untamed beast that everyone senses, is her sex. And in buying into the role of protector, men foreclose the very thing all of us are starving for. In essence, they are protecting women from the very thing that would free them both.

When I talk about the beast, or the darkness, this is what I mean: the one who can see. This is the one who's been relegated to the position of the unclean, unholy, frightening and deformed being that we work so hard to keep hidden and locked down. This is the force that is so strong that we pile onto it our fear and our shame. One of the ways we shame the beast, who responds with a primal impulse that doesn't give a damn about propriety or political correctness, is by saying things like "What do you mean by that?" or "What are your sources?" We look for intensive denotation rather than trusting intuitive connotation. We demand explanations and apologies rather than going in for the deeper message. And then we begin to shut down that voice that knows, beyond all reason, and we collude with each other to keep it silenced. And soon that voice, which is the voice of our desire, gets shut down and we don't have access to it at all.

But at some point we decide to strip away the facade of appropriateness, and everything we haven't said for 25 years starts to tumble out. And pretty soon it gets tired of simply existing, of simply acclimating to its surroundings. All the immune responses we've used to keep that thing down are used to bolster reasons to keep the beast down. We exalt ideas about science and spirituality, but they are largely based on fear rather than lofty ethics. We blindly trust institutions that were fashioned to give us the illusion of control, to keep this deeper inner knowing hidden.

There is an understandable apprehension when it comes to entertaining our beast, which is essentially the primal voice of our creative power. Creating is a lot scarier than fixing or maintaining, so when there isn't anything wrong, we often attempt to fix the same thing or create another problem so that we can keep fixing rather than place ourselves in the realm of creation. Seth Godin's idea of the dip, a temporary setback we can respond to with persistence, is something that most of us run away from; thus, we hit the ceiling of our genius rather than bursting through it to see what we're really made of.

When women shy away from the dip and refuse to get messy, we become strident—tight and controlling, and attempting to stay within the narrow confines of goodness. We assume a primarily masculine structure that doesn't let us have our emotions as women, which makes us stoic. But then we wonder why we can't get love. We aren't willing to face the fact that love happens in the messy and the mire, in the receptivity and surrender, in the hunger that is too urgent to worry about disappointment. When we are in a state of reception, we are in our involuntary. This is where our true power and potential as human beings can be found. We may look messy and nothing might make sense for a period of time, but we'll be able to magnetize people. And our beast then makes us brilliant in all realms, because it is what happens organically—when we are not trying to force ourselves into the straightjacket of good and proper.

Mind you, accessing our beast and offering it approval is not an easy or linear path. When you first plug in, you do get electrocuted. It is volatility personified. The first time I felt it, I thought I was having a panic attack and needed to go to the hospital. I was told, "Nicole, you're just getting turned on." All that voltage going through your system is

simply you waking up. We all demonize the thing that wakes up. The minute you get away from that thing, however, we start to cool off and our condition feels worse and worse and worse. And when you're in it, you're the most awake and alive you've ever been. All the good is coming, all the bad is coming, and it's all okay. That chemical process we call volatility is the awakening. But then we get away from it and we barricade the beast with so much punitive legislation. And then we insist, "No, I'm living a healthy life." Healthy is probably the most detrimental word when it comes to waking up.

With clients, I can guess where they are trying to be good and were told somewhere along the way about the right things to want or say. For instance, he might be saying something in a monotone voice and nodding while saying it, so this suggests that he's trying to get me to go along with it but doesn't really believe it himself. We may tell ourselves that we aren't ready to go into our depths or the chaos, but I think everyone is ready all the time; it's just that we quite convincingly underestimate our capacity and resilience. And if we are afraid that everything will fall apart once we give that feral creature wide pastures to roam in, here's the good news: everything might fall apart in the beginning, but the best way (ultimately) to tame a beast is to simply let it be one. An animal in the wild is much different from an animal in captivity. The animal in captivity is either going to freak out or retract. And most of us have settled for retraction, but I say: put the beast back in its natural habitat rather than making it change its behavior. It isn't there to fuck up your life, it will only change the aspects that are ultimately not working in your favor. Offer your beast enough love and trust to let it out of that musty pen you've been keeping it in, and it will be the homing pigeon that brings you home to your desire.

Exercise: The Beast

The question to ask in this exercise is: What's the cost of blocking my beast?

What tendencies do you have that block your beast? Name the fear that blocks you and then see what is stuck behind that story of fear (i.e, fear that people will suck you dry is usually a fear of surrender and this is what keeps your beast down).

Our culture serves to keep us in line. There were once seamstresses who could sew 35 items an hour. A seamstress was sent in who could sew 50, and the others kicked her ass until she sewed 35. That is what our culture is designed to do, and our work is the hard work of raising the bar rather than lowering ourselves down to the current bar.

Spend five minutes with your partner figuring out what your fear is. Then ask over and over and over: what is the cost? And get it all out.

Section 9: Love

We are constructed of this thing we call love. It is not outside of us; it is not hidden or concealed in any form. It is available to us and can be experienced through contact. Contact is what animates the love that, until now, has existed in potential. We must remember that the locus is here, always within us; here, emanating outward.

And with this knowing comes responsibility. For if each of us is love, it means that to become who we are in this life—to actualize this blueprint, to stretch this love that is our essence to its furthest reaches, to grow not only in one direction but in equal, simultaneous, and balanced fullness—we must be willing to break out of our known reality. It is like the task of the acorn, which is actually a blueprint for an entire ecology: an oak tree where birds rest; whose leaves fall to the ground for bugs to chomp on and make soil; in whose shade other plant life grows. Like the acorn, the love is always breaking out in order to become fullness. This is the same for each of us.

Like the acorn, there is a hard shell we must break through in order to realize our love. This is the shell of our habituated patterns. Like any shell, our habits help us feel safe. It is the world of ideas that binds us. Ideas are our created reality, what we use to protect us from actual reality. Most of us have between us and reality a world of ideas, most powerfully in the domain of love. In this domain, we live in a frozen position of reaching, and this reaching is a form of protection: a way of holding at arm's length the realization of what we have, which is inherent love. To glimpse this love once would forever shatter our ideas. So we wrap our acorn shell around us. We complain and say we want to fall in love. We want some great accident to bypass our rejection.

To not recognize that we are love—here to become a greater and greater ecology of love, an interdependent system of love—and to keep ourselves small, tight, and bound means that we must live in a perpetual state of rejecting what is. And because we are so busy looking inwards at our lack, we don't notice how we hurt the infinite displays of offerings. It is humbling. And to do this, we must focus only on what we lack, what is not there, or how the universe or lover or friend is not meeting our normal prescription for how to have us feel the love that we are.

We do not admit that we are love, for this would put us in danger of beginning the chain of actualization, the out-of-control sensation of becoming that which we are not willing to do, the challenging work of love. We are not willing to open our hearts and experience love itself, regardless of the comings and goings of its emanations. Instead, we try to force these emanations of love into becoming love itself, and blame them when we ourselves drain them of their contents. We are like ducklings that follow around the first thing we see when the experience of love is permitted to rise up within us. We attach to the representative of love and not to love itself.

And at the same time, we are not committed. There is a lack of reverence for the forms

love takes. If we could understand that love is like breath to life, that it is how our soul takes life in and lets it go, then we would understand that our lives are saved in each moment that we experience love. And in this, we would care for the forms. If we agree to use one another's bodies as vessels through which to experience love, then it is our duty and obligation, not to each other, but to love itself, to remain open to offer one another the deepest reverence: "I am yours for life."

But this is where we get confused; this is where we lose sight. Because "yours" in the sense of love is much different from "yours" in the sense of conditioning. "Yours" in love means always available to be used as a conduit in the raw, potent, true form of love—to be willing to live in a perpetual state of expanding one's capacity to allow love to come through. It is saying, "I agree to be the place for you to call home." "Yours" in terms of conditioning means to agree to keep oneself as small as possible, consistently within the domain of another's expectations. Wide open spaces threaten this kind of love, because eventually what arises is something out of alignment with expectation, and in that, love itself is endangered.

In Judaism, the bride wears an opaque veil. Some say this is to symbolize the fact that one never truly knows who they are marrying. We never know what infinity rests within another's body. Were we to make a vow to another person that is congruent with unconditional love, it would be: "I vow to live in the mystery with you, to be out of control, to use my entire being to draw out the same in you, to be a healing force. I will trust, so that the mystery from within you can arise. When I stand in the face of something I don't understand, I will draw out more through approval. I will rest with you, grateful for the opportunity to have seen you. And I vow to do this for life, whether or not I like what I see."

Yes, for life. Though, for life doesn't mean in the same form always. We must not confuse love with form, as the two are not the same. Romantic love is a form of love—a form of love that tends to bully other forms out. A form of love that tends to cause our minds to fixate and, with bated breath, to await the next gratification. We get attached to love when it wears this particular outfit and don't recognize it when it changes clothes.

As we search for a form of love again and again, we do not hear it saying "Hello, I'm still here. I'm just relaxing, catching my breath, resting in friendship. I am still love." For love doesn't go anywhere, we do.

And how we lie in the name of love! We lie that we can hold ourselves in the mold of another's projections. We lie that our love for another is not contingent on their remaining very still in the small box we have constructed for them. Over time, we construct the illusion that we hold back in order to please another and when we find ourselves drowning in this pleasing, we blame the other. We blame the other for our having pretended to be something we are not. Because we were not willing to be true to the edicts of love, to be honest, to have a permanent source of love, we blame. We rely on another's limited rations and when they run out, we blame.

So in love we vow always to be ourselves, even at the risk of displeasing another, of losing another. This is how we honor love. We don't sign checks our ass can't cash. We honor love by paying our bills in present time and not letting them pile up and later filing bankruptcy. No, we pay those fears of abandonment off now and now and now, in cash, by telling and receiving the truth.

Which brings me to another point, and this is how we cut off the arms of love, which are truth. We threaten to stop holding another when they speak a truth we find difficult, a truth that might detonate a depth of charge that we have not done the work to disarm ourselves. We withdraw our drawbridge from another, their access to our love, if they speak the truth. We train those around us to lie, to play out a theatre for our egos, and then we get upset when reality breaks through the third wall. Yet, if each being were to live in its funktionslust (the lust of function, like when a dog that's meant to jump is jumping), we would be in a perpetual state of play—a gorgeous hide and seek with the mystery of life itself. And we would play as masters play, in the way that cheating is silly because there is no competition, there is no other, there is just play. This is play for play's sake. The play feels so good that we would do anything to continue, even lose ourselves—not to the limited hands of another, but to the infinite arms of love itself. We would rip off our garments, our identities, and masks to bring ourselves into greater and deeper connection. We would want every inch of skin exposed so that the sweet nectar of life could touch us.

Because this is what we seek—not the trappings of freedom, not the results of freedom, but freedom itself. And this is only available now, naked, in unrestrained intercourse with the moment. We do not find it by going back again and again to the scene of an accident, a moment when love was able to crash through our shell or to the body where we once experienced it. Instead, we merely open the window and let it all in. We do not fall in, be in, yearn for, or think about love. We become it. This is our birthright and this is our destiny.

Using love and sex in order to get something in any way is a misuse—for approval, for prestige, for security, for anything that distances us from the primordial emptiness. Love, if anything, is not acquisition. Love does not seek to attain a thing; rather, it seeks to let go. It is a constant shaving, paring down, disrobing of consciousness in order to see things nakedly, intimate with all of life's contours and crevices.

But all too often we turn off the light of consciousness in the face of love. We use it as an excuse to not see and be seen. All too often capture and being taken hostage are mistaken for love. This is for two reasons. We are unwilling to take responsibility for our love; if we are in prison, another is responsible for our care and feeding. In prison, we do not need to feel the ache of desire, the yearning to be filled. We do not need to go on the great adventure of touching nature, of picking berries and of tasting different plants; we do not need to risk danger. Instead, we settle for the distant remnants of love, all to avoid being self-generative, all for the guarantee of a done deal.

Beneath this lies the deep-seated belief that, at the core, there is something wrong with us and we deserve no better. I've sat with this. I've thought long and hard about this. Love has no opponent other than this thought, this scarcity and wrongness that leads us to reach outside of ourselves. To be love, then, would be to be the embodiment of this message: You, just as you are, are perfect. This would not necessarily change anyone, but it might give the tyranny of mistaken belief a run for its money. It might let the mistaken belief know that someone is onto its game long enough to throw it off balance until its holder can dash past the fear, make their way to the door, and finally open it for themselves to see the world beyond.

And this is where we could start to become generative in our lives, to face the fear that absorbs our life force—to take each of these fractured thoughts of inadequacy that we are flailing against and sit with them. Because really, they just want attention, real attention. Once that's given, they become our best allies. We laugh at the pranks they pulled on us.

The next thing that I would say is: Please do not change a thing about yourself. Scoundrel, hustler, thief, insensitive, insecure, thoughtless; these are all fuel for love. These, when permitted to make contact with approval, become the most loyal, the most dedicated, the truest form of love, because they are the stray dogs, the feral kitties of our being. When housed in love, they can remember the horrors of homelessness. Let us love one another there in those depths, in that underbelly, in the places where another's light has not reached. Let us stake our claim—not through force, contract, or command, but by another receiving from us. Let it be that the scent of warm food draws another in, that when they enter we feed them well, and when they wish to exit, we joyously wrap their scarf around their neck. Let it be that our door is never locked, neither keeping one in, nor keeping one out, even if they lock their own. Let it be that each of us is a mirror for the perfection of the other.

Section 10: The Eight Stages of Orgasm

(Workbook of the 8 Stages of Orgasm included as a handout in the program)

Here, we come to the eight stages of orgasm. Clinicians will tell you that the sexual response, or orgasmic, cycle has four phases: excitement, plateau, climax, and resolution. While both men and women experience these phases, the timing is usually vastly different—and two people rarely concur in these states. However, we recognize all experience and sensation as orgasm: either unpotentiated or in its full, realized state. The problem is that we have a linear, ladder-based approach to thinking about orgasm or our general life experiences, such that we imagine the acceleration toward intensity to eventually peak rather than marking one aspect of a revolution on a wheel that can go backwards or forwards, slow down or speed up, at any time. We also tend to place orgasm squarely in the realm of sex, even though it has a much vaster circumference and can essentially be applied to any and all sensation, which we can also call “energy.”

First of all, the act of moving towards freedom and pleasure, not as a reaction to pain and adversity but as the consequence of being in congruity with our deepest desires, takes practice. This is particularly true for women, who have a tendency to place other people's needs before our own—and in some cases, to expect the skies to magically open and rain down their largesse without even having to articulate what it is they most desire. But to be in the full largesse of our own orgasm, we must learn to manage our own internal climate. We must handle our own basic needs—sexual, spiritual, emotional, physical, and otherwise—before taking any kind of action in the world. Rather than waiting for someone or something to waltz along and sweep us up with grandiose promises of fulfillment, we assume responsibility by cultivating our energy and spending it wisely. Our orgasm becomes our currency in the world, and we use it to create a continuous exchange between our internal landscape and external world, which makes manifesting our deepest desires a fluid and generative process.

The cultivation and movement of energy is a tricky transaction, though. While many of us find it fairly easy to form desires, many of us also get stuck when it comes to putting our money where our mouth is and making the shift from thinking to action. This can happen without us even consciously realizing it's happening. And the familiar sense of stuckness, of free-floating irritability that has no real cause, has to do with this sense of surfeit. And while feeling full might sound nice, having a place or way to expend our energy is necessary. When we don't, we experience something that we call tumescence, or the build-up of sexual energy in the body, which can transform regular turn-on into the inability to turn on—even though all the symptoms simply point to the need to expend energy.

Your tumescence level is the degree to which you are or are not capable of experiencing pleasure. It's the major limiting factor in our receptive capacity: our ability to truly soak up the goodness in our lives, however it chooses to make itself known. When we are not experiencing pleasure, however, sexual energy builds in our body and creates

tumescence. Tumescence can manifest as a free-floating anxiety and restlessness, the sense that something isn't quite right although we can't put our finger on it. In general, we have a tendency to want to contain this uncomfortable sensation by landing it on something tangible (hence, seeking outlets and solutions in things and habits that won't really satisfy us but that are easily accessible and even encouraged: shopping, compulsive eating, compulsive working out, workaholism, etc.). We typically recognize this symptom in women when we dispense judgments like, "Oh, she just needs a good fuck"--which can actually be quite effective in helping to dislodge energy that has become embedded and immobilized in our bodies. Tumescence also signals a sense of heightened energy in the mind and body, which can either leave us feeling depleted or have us bouncing off the walls in an attempt to blow our wad. With tumescence, the dynamic tension that may exist between two people can switch from playful banter to hostile antagonism in a heartbeat.

Because we are mired in stimuli that affect our ability to be fully connected to our bodies and more attuned to the mandates of the reptilian brain (which tends to make the most of our unconscious choices, no matter how civilized we pride ourselves on being), we don't realize that tumescence is not our natural state. However, it wouldn't be correct to peg tumescence as a negative and cumbersome thing that needs to be managed with extreme vigilance. While it's important to recognize its more unsavory effects in our lives, we must also be chary of demonizing it. The good news is that tumescence is not simply an unwanted visitor that needs to be forcefully expelled from our person; in fact, it's a valuable messenger. Tumescence is a pivotal counterpoint to all the "good" stuff, a signal of where we must place our attention in order to address our needs effectively and create meaningful change. It is also the pleasurable tension that accumulates in the body right before climax; of course, it only becomes problematic when the buildup seems to approach fever pitch without any sign of actual release.

Tumescence is, quite simply, unpotentiated orgasm, the purest and most stalwart energy we have at our disposal—because it's the very stuff that life is made up of. Thus, instead of viewing our moodiness and volatility as character flaws that need to be chipped mercilessly away at in order to arrive at the perfectly chiseled masterpiece, we can view our tumescence as blocked energy in search of efficient release. And because it's just that, this means that our blocked states of being needn't be seen as a life sentence we must resign ourselves to or seek a well-meaning but probably not altogether understanding specialist's help to "fix." It simply means they are covers for the fact that our turn-on is ready to blow the lid off and get cranking so the rest of the world can see the temporarily congealed parts of us that are infinitely vibrant, eminently powerful, and aching to get into motion.

If tumescence sounds pretty similar to that syndrome suffered by our prim, corseted Victorian sisters in the days of yore, that's because it is. While it's not a term circulating in popular discourse (can you imagine people on the elevator politely asking each other, "So, how's your tumescence today?"), it's connected to the puritanical values we associate with a legion of ladies who carried fainting salts and took extra precautions

when it came to guarding against temptation (including covering up piano legs to avoid the suggestion of a succulent ankle). Of course, the myth of Victorian mores is turned on its head by the outré subcultures and sexual practices that abounded in those days—but that’s another story. Back to tumescence.

Let’s get old school and talk about the ancients. One of the major consequences of letting tumescence build is a phenomenon that ancient Greek physicians termed “hysteria.” It’s a term that stems from the Greek word “hysterikos,” which referred to a purportedly prevalent condition particular to women, marked by disturbances of the uterus. Hippocrates believed that madness resulted in a woman whose uterus had become too light and dry from a dearth of sexual intercourse; as a result, it snaked up through her body and compressed the heart and lungs. At some point, hysteria became a catch-all diagnosis when it came to explaining women’s anxiety, fainting spells, irritability, depression, and even what one Victorian physician termed “a tendency to cause trouble.”

Some of the treatments for hysteria included eliminating spice from one’s diet, getting lots of sleep, seclusion, and complete sensory deprivation. But the thing that lots of doctors noticed is that most of the women who complained about the symptoms associated with hysteria were single, nuns, or in unhappy marriages. So a different route that some physicians took was one that dispensed with the notion of deprivation altogether and upped the ante on pleasure. As a last resort, they decided to aim for “hysterical paroxysm” (in laymen’s terms, orgasm), which was primarily kept hush-hush, at least until doctors began writing about it as an effective way to handle the widespread malaise of hysteria in the 1950s or so—when vibrators were used in homes and offices to quell the widespread epidemic of unquenched desire. While hysteria may sound like a mere fun fact from history or one of those things that makes you go hmmm, the very concept is an interesting notation of the fact that tumescence is something that should be relieved rather than ignored or, worse yet, resisted, before it gets the chance to mushroom into major problems.

When it comes to looking at the phases of orgasm, we must always remember that they are circular rather than linear, and that the symptoms of tumescence (or turn-off) clue us into where we need to surrender, and where this surrender can bring us freedom and exaltation of each phase. When tumescence is felt as sensation, it is merely untapped desire, not a philosophical notion or something that is “bad.” It is raw, unrefined oil, which once placed through the machine of orgasm, becomes a usable resource.

Our narrow notion of orgasm is akin to trying to melt a stick of butter with a blow torch. The outer layers melt, but not much else does. Feeling each stroke, feeling that heat between having and wanting, is like melting butter with a low flame. The butter melts evenly and separates. The pure desire separates from the biological drive. With this clarified desire, we can recognize the nuances in our highs and lows, and the way we view our lives takes on a deep and potent richness. Each experience becomes a portal to our liberation.

Section 11: Relationship by Design

(Relationship Preamble and Stroke work included as a handout in the program)

Our aim is to stay connected no matter what, to use our relationships as a crucible for healing rather than a cause for separation. When we forego the tired old operating manual of man/woman dynamics, the contract-based relating that circumscribed our interactions such that we were “getting” rather than “giving,” and even “giving” was marked by very specific sets of conditions, we reveal and restore our original birthright of connection.

Thus, we must recognize what sends us into fight, flight, or freeze mode on the path to realized relationships. Most of the time, we operate on the basis of getting up strokes; experience either contributes to or detracts from our self-concept, and this can limit us from catching the wave of our desire, because we’re so concerned with looking good that we can’t even recognize the benefits of having our ego hit.

All suffering is a result of a disruption in connection. There are few road maps designed specifically to develop the skill-set for accelerating connection in life. We are woefully uneducated about everything it takes, from developing the capacity to remain in high sensation to expanding so much that our preferences are supplanted by our desires. And the greatest desire we have, one which we are nearly unconscious of, is the desire to stay connected.

This is why we must unmoor relationship from ego boosts, compensatory devices, and things we do simply to keep ourselves from loneliness or boredom. We must take relationship to the level of practice: the end goal being undisrupted connection with a sense timelessness and lack of self-consciousness. In other words, relationship as a flow practice.

The personality is something akin to a labyrinth that others travel to reach our deepest self. The experience of intimacy includes built-in reticence, a vulnerability that has us move towards or away from it according to our intimacy quotient. Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson has talked about the “intimacy vs. isolation” crisis, which he says reaches a peak of importance in a person’s twenties but continues to remain a central developmental task throughout our adulthood. Close relationships remain a vital part of our well-being for as long as we live. Obstacles to achieving intimacy become obstacles to self-fulfillment. But of course, not everyone is able to experience intimacy to the maximum degree, given our conditioning and the larger conversation about what intimacy is. Erikson predicted that those who suffer difficulties in childhood or adolescence won’t be able to reach the kind of level of sharing required for true intimacy. Those who remain isolated continue to experience more difficulties: if they have children, they won’t feel totally connected to them; in a job, they’ll feel less secure or able to reach out to fellow employees; their passing years will make the task of self-acceptance even more difficult because their lives are absent of the vital sap that comes

from solid intimate bonds with others. And even those who are able to have, or at least mimic, intimate bonds (e.g., they're the life of the party in social situations, have a gaggle of friends, are never not in a relationship) can typically be found to be controlling the level of intimacy they are experiencing and settling for the substitute rather than the real thing, which is not some docile animal we can pet into submission or depend on to fulfill our emotional needs whenever they might feel urgent.

In order to feel the ground below our feet at all times, we lab-control our environment by settling for ritualistic rather than living, breathing, changing relationships. One extreme example of this is the couple that vows to stay together "for the sake of the children." I say extreme because, on the one hand, they've allowed the passionate side of their relationship to fall into total collapse—we know this because if there were passion they wouldn't be saying "for the sake of the children"—and yet, having re-grouped around the goal of raising their children, they have a remarkably well-functioning household. The relationship endures. And while they're obviously missing one side of life, the side that gives it that necessary *joie de vivre*, at the same time they also experience a type of deeply gratifying fulfillment that those who never find purpose in their life, never feel inspired to anything beyond self-interest, will ever experience.

This is where the relationship isn't built on the need for companionship but rather the joy of fellowship: co-creating something together that is bigger than the individuals involved. As this example demonstrates, both sides are really vital, both passion and fulfillment. Either alone would, admittedly, make for a vastly better relationship than the ones that are stuck in the bubble, but will also be noticeably imbalanced. Passion and fulfillment balance each other.

The greater the "circle of love" the couple can create together, the deeper the bond and the greater the sense of purpose, of *funktionslust*—the feeling that you're doing what you were designed to do. From self-love to love of one's partner, to love of family, to love of one's own tribe (this is about as far as most people's bubble will stretch—beyond this they'll have to puncture and leave the bubble), and on.

But let's be clear—we're not talking about world peace, a can't-everyone-just-get-along, eradicating-all-pain-in-the-world type of love. What we're ultimately striving for is unconditional freedom, the ability to enter any realm and have facility and fluency there. We get that by playing along (and across) the contours of our boundaries repeatedly until they're no longer boundaries we attain one more notch of freedom there. So this is not the love of affirmations and the suppression of all negative emotions. This love is arrived at by going into, and through, every flavor on the spectrum of emotion—finding those places where we lock down, where we retract, and instead entering them again and again until we find liberation. This path does, in fact, lead to an organic, spontaneous, almost involuntary upwelling of love for all people and all things. This is our natural, unadulterated state, free of fear, doubt, and other self-imposed shackles. And it is attained not in spite of, but through, the challenges and humanity that our relationships immerse us in.

Withholding is the conscious or unconscious action of “holding back,” retreating, employing silence where words would bring greater connection. It is fundamentally based on the belief that others are responsible for us and “owe” it to us to come and get us or to “earn” the right to be in our hearts, while at the same time rooted in the belief that we “know better.” A key to remember is that beneath every withhold is withheld love: love that wanted to be expressed but will now likely rot. The rotten form of a withhold is called resentment. Resentment is a build-up, or residue, of unexpressed feelings. Resentments grow exponentially.

Basic characteristics of one who has a disposition of **withholding** are:

- Control
- Superiority
- Easily startled
- Smug/sanctimonious
- Perfectionism
- Critical/ biting
- Over- (worked, achiever, etc.)
- High expectations of self and other

The **withholder** in the exalted state brings **integrity** to the relationship.

Provoking is the conscious or unconscious tendency to “trigger” others as a way of diverting the attention from oneself and gaining dominance. The provocateur may present as innocent in seeking to merely “express oneself” or may move all the way up to rage and violence. Provocation is based in the belief that others will not “show up” unless we rile them. The provocation works at cross-purposes to our deeper desires, and sends people fleeing. A key to remember is that beneath every provocation is a tenderness that wants to be touched. This tenderness, when not met, often hardens, and the hardened form eventually becomes insensitivity.

Basic characteristics of one who has a disposition of **provoking** are:

- Intrusive (doing for others what they could do for themselves)
- Makes unilateral decisions
- Irresponsible
- Leaves messes
- Fearful
- Dramatic
- Inferiority/superiority alternating

The **provocateur** in the heightened state brings **power** to the relationship.

Obscuration is the conscious or unconscious tendency to deflect attention by putting up smoke screens. The practitioner of obscuration often experiences anything from confused to checked out. Obscuration is based in the belief that avoidance will eliminate

pain and can be a response of learned helplessness where the person does not perceive a way to “win.” A key to remember is that beneath the fog of fear lies a stable love waiting to be expressed. When this love is dissipated, it can become apathy.

Basic characteristics of one who has a disposition of **obscuring** are:

- Absent
- Goofs things up
- Overcomplicates
- Magical thinking
- Can’t get traction
- Passive aggressive

The **obscurer** in the heightened state brings **love** to the relationship.

These are the ways we send misdirects to others as to how to reach us. Often these behaviors are unconscious and automatic. They are as involuntary as the control of body temperature through chattering teeth to get warm or sweating to cool off. The difference is that we can expand our “homeostatic” response through bringing awareness to our behaviors around intimacy. There are two elements that are necessary here: self-examination and direct practice. Self-knowledge without practice is theoretical and highly open to delusion. Practice without self-knowledge leaves us open to causing greater harm than necessary.

In the absence of practice and self-knowledge, many of us settle for contractual relating: setting or assuming fixed agreements that keep us feeling secure, even when we’ve built our foundations on sand. But even if we peak in this arrangement and think we have the perfect contract worked out, it cannot remain this way forever. With contractual relating based on the desire for security, we seldom recognize when it’s time to change the stroke and redesign the contract—let alone entertain the possibility of relating non-contractually and in the moment. And when the contract is no longer working, the relationship disintegrates.

The primary reason the contract fails is that it was a contract between (and in support of) our personae, which are false constructs to begin with. If it were relating between the two actual people, between the actual circumstances of the moment, the contract wouldn’t even have been necessary. Relating between two people requires being able to be in the midst of uncomfortable emotions and upon shaky ground. We hold onto our image of who someone is, willingly dimming our attention to who they actually are, and then are surprised to feel betrayed when their true behavior becomes strong enough to break through and into our sight.

Our concept of relationship as monogamous and inward-focused is all backwards in many ways. It isn’t that monogamy is bad in and of itself; it’s that the element that’s necessary to actually keep a relationship alive—that is, the expression of truth about one’s deepest desires—is completely squeezed out. It becomes such that the person you

least tell the truth to is your partner. This is because we seek relationships for peace and security, when an honest relationship will be the least peaceful or secure place you can possibly be. And it's this sense of chaos, of unpredictability, that makes the possibility of expressing truth, of going deeper, even possible. We just need to be courageous enough to surrender to it.

Another mistake we make in the current model of relating is this: we judge the value of a relationship by how long it lasts. To us, every relationship that ends is a failed relationship, and the person we once swore to "love forever" is antagonistically viewed as the one who has withheld what we most wanted. He or she is no longer "The One." But in truth, even the briefest passion can perhaps be more significant than a long yet bland relationship. That short relationship may offer a specific and much-needed nutrient, but trying to extend it beyond its right time and function leads to resentment and depletion. Without change, relating becomes static and is zapped of all its vitality.

People obsessed with security are typically the most insecure people you will meet. Their attempt to hold everything together is the very thing that is robbing them of their sense of peace. As the alchemical cycle has taught us, surrender is what leads to the experience of growth and aliveness, as well as the offering of benevolent aid, which lets us see that we don't need to have to fix everything on our own. For security-minded people, things like money and "perfect" relationships become symbols that tell others we are living the way we want to live; but when we are actually doing this, we don't need symbols, and we certainly don't need to convince other people of our happiness.

The entire aim of OneTaste is for everyone to have a genuine rather than rose-tinted experience of who they are, and to be receptive of this beautiful and simple reality in others rather than building fortresses of false expectations that keep us from seeing and knowing each other. True freedom is about mobility rather than frozenness: the ability to enter, immerse in, and get out of any world or set of circumstances. We spend most of our time figuring out how to differentiate ourselves and make ourselves special and unique, but this kind of specialization doesn't serve us an evolutionary advantage. Adaptability and flexibility, as well as the ability to dive into any world and be part of it, is the mark of a successful species. When we attain this kind of malleability, which allows our previously narrow estimation of self to be stretched well past its limits, we start to see everything as real, true, valid, and important. We can ditch the high horse long enough to make pure contact with another and immerse. We immerse in an experience until we love it, and once we have loved it, it is time to go. Being a player is like being on a barbecue and having the frame of mind to say, "Turn me over, I'm getting well done on this side," to be cooked and to keep playing. And we are playing for our freedom, nothing less.

This can sometimes take us to dark places. And while the darkness seems dirty when you exit it and look upon it from the outside, it is not this way when you are immersed in it. You are able to deeply love it and to see how endearing it can be. Please note that what we are doing does not constitute an "ascendant" practice, in which we are throwing off the

shackles of our corporeal selves to attain to some higher spiritual notion of what it means to be a good person. This is a practice that is about building up such a strong immune system, whether you are in places of darkness or light, that you can ingest absolutely anything and find your way back to center. It is a practice of transformation in which the antidote can be found right in the poison. And it is not a practice that is about self-protection, but expansion. If we walk around the world unprotected, we will be safe and we will be free. It's that simple. The only thing we're held bondage by is our particular set of beliefs. On the other side of that is freedom. The places we like and tend to cleave to are the byproduct of this freedom. The places we hate are the places where you can realize true freedom.

What we're looking to dissolve our crystallized habits and preferences, which are based on the idea that built into any circumstance is a requisite response. In semantics, it's called conditional reality: If "this" happens, then I have to "that."

Some examples of conditional reality are:

If someone dies, I have to grieve and cry.

If everyone feels bad, I should feel bad.

If I run out of money, I have to work for more.

If I have shame, I must hide it.

If someone leaves, I have to feel abandoned.

When someone misunderstands me, I must correct them.

When I share a vulnerable moment with a woman, I must compliment her.

When I say I will, I can't change my mind.

When someone takes care of me, I must feel incapable of taking care of myself.

When someone doesn't like me, I have to change myself.

If a man opposes what I'm saying, I have to be wrong.

When I feel the shame of having others see the level of how I'm unskillful, I have to go back to my old level.

A preference is simply a habituated response, a kneejerk reaction that is characterized by either hate or love. But with deep-seated desires, we are pulled by something that is contrary to preference and habit. If it's a deep-seated desire, it may feel ambivalent because of its unfamiliarity, but it is also driven by a thread of rightness that is incontrovertible. It is this deep desire that must be placed in the driver's seat, because it is the truest exemplar of the kinds of relationships we can have with others.

So how do we design our relationship steps in a way that invites connection?

1. Admit that a certain depth is necessary for the true self to be revealed, and that ultimately our greatest desire, that which underlies all others, is the experience of seeing and being seen that comes through connection.
2. Start to realize that the connection we yearned for was possible and that, with this connection, we can gain access to a deeper internal power.
3. Make a commitment to live in the "third," the place not of me or you, but of us.

4. Take on a practice of thorough self-inquiry in an effort to know and integrate one's whole self for the purpose of connecting with others.
5. Enlist at least one other ally outside of the relationship to walk us through the delicate work of self-excavation.
6. Take stock of compensatory behaviors and methods that work at cross purposes, as well as the underlying desire.
7. Examine where these compensations have played out in our relationships and the ways they have disrupted connection.
8. Create reconnection wherever we can through sincere apology and deed, focusing not on the actions of others but on being who we want to be.
9. Adopt a daily practice of maintenance that incorporates the prior steps: centering, acknowledging, and repairing disconnection.
10. Find ways to anchor our relationships into higher-order goals and desires such as service, self- realization, and lighting up the power grid.
11. Make our experience available to others on the same path.

Section 12: Trauma

What we know of as trauma results from the freezing-up of desire, especially that desire which is involuntary and often quite unconscious to us. We may experience this involuntary desire that gets stuck based on a directive from our cortex, which insists we cannot do that “bad” thing (say, killing your father for attacking you). The desire is immobilized in its tracks, albeit for a perfectly reasonable reason—but the problem with not completing the desire to its fruition, or at least finding an appropriate substitute, is that it becomes stuck. The feeling centers of the brain are abandoned when we succumb to the mandates of the cortex. It’s akin to the fabled “inner child” getting crammed in an attic and being told it isn’t safe to come out.

The way that we deal with trauma, especially of a sexual nature, is to reclaim our desire—whether it’s the desire to kill the person who hurt us, or recognize the sliver of pleasure that the violation may have given us (which is especially taboo in a culture that is hooked on the righteous indignation of the victim and seldom recognizes that some of our deepest longings are rooted in unacceptable things). We don’t necessarily have to carry out that desire, but we at least need to acknowledge its presence. This is because when turn-on is present and high, and you have a history of trauma, you are likely to dissociate from the sensation. You’ve been indoctrinated with the notion that sensation isn’t safe, because it is the same sympathetic arousal that you experienced with trauma—but now you are experiencing it with turn-on!

When it comes to trauma, depending on your tumescence type, those who are fixed (risk-averse, serious, and restrained) become even more rigid and anxious; those who are hypervolatile (reactive, impulsive, and unpredictable) become even more aroused; and those who are dissipated (checked-out, confused, forgetful, and apathetic) become even more spacey. Desire is a deeply destabilizing force because, in its purest form, it is involuntary. It’s not something we ask for, and it’s not something we can control.

Because desire co-arises with movement, we can always re-experience trauma from the place of the limbic brain rather than jumping right into our cortex. Trauma can be conducive to discovering our desire, because in trauma, we feel. And then we connect. In fact, the insular cortex area of our brain may seem like it is separate from our limbic system, but it’s connected to things such as pain, orgasm, and mindfulness, so there is an inextricable link between the two.

So with trauma, especially of the sexual variety, we can heal our pain by not necessarily reenacting it but going into the sensations that we felt and subsequently were forced to suppress. The event may not have been violent—in fact, it may have been as simple as an incident that threatened harm or embarrassment. But the level of perceived threat and traumatic reaction is individual and almost as impossible to anticipate as a desire.

Unfortunately, the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator is one of the things that we are

not nearly as chary of as we should be. We may as well be selling t-shirts with slogans like, “I got raped and all I got was a victim story,” or “I raped someone and all I got was a perpetrator story.” When it comes to calibrating experiences that are extreme, the worst possible thing that can happen is that we freeze into an identity. In that identity is a clear perception that is projected onto us and that we all too often blindly accept.

When it comes to trauma, we know that it’s dark. We have generally negative associations with darkness because we are so fearful of going into it; some of us make it to this darkness in the realm of addiction, which can be recurrent among those who have suffered a trauma. When there is a strong enough ballast to bring us into this darkness, to take us all the way down, we get the experience of surrender, which occurs only at the very bottom. Then we get the visceral experience of benevolent aid arriving to us, and this is where we find that darkness has the ability to heal and nourish us in unbelievably beautiful ways. It is not the enemy we believed it to be. In fact, it may well be more powerful than the transcendent peaks where we find ourselves blissing out again and again. When we have the experience of unconditional love in this darkness, we are powerfully transformed, because we are aware that we can find it anywhere.

Orgasm is the intersection between the spiritual and the material. Being in the material realm, when we look at our lives, we are primarily living in the outcome—at the mercy of everything that happens to us. We don’t know how to see the cause, so we live in the conditions. When I look at anything that is occurring, I think: what is the cause?

I too have a story, and I’m no victim. It isn’t simply that I’m not a victim—it’s just that I’m not a victim in terms of who is framing my story and creating a very limited construct of who I am. And all identity becomes stuck and solidified, usually on someone else’s terms, when we say, “I am that.”

When we get to the root of what a victim is, we find that what exists is an unbearable desire for pure release and surrender. What happens is that this desire freezes on the way to its completion. It is simply a rudimentary step in the evolution towards total surrender, towards the total willingness to experience your experience without preciousness or false sentiment and to recognize, “Even here; there is freedom even here.”

When we get to the root of what a perpetrator is, we find that what exists is an unbearable desire to love, through all the horrifically inaccurate methods they have been given. And because we don’t understand nature, we create extremely twisted tributaries and ways for expression to come through, and then it becomes blocked, like a stick in a river pummeling against the elements because it has no natural way to flow.

It is believed that a medicine man, in a variety of cultures, becomes a medicine man by descending into the dark places and then emerging from them. The one who is stuck is the sick person. We can see every trauma, every psychologically induced illness, as an initiation. Even the worst things we fall into are part of this initiatory effort—for it lands

us in something that belongs to us.

People have come to me with devastating stories. I believe that I was given my own story so that I could say to them, “That’s a bummer,” and it doesn’t have to take on much additional weight, value, and intensity. Unfortunately, we tend to create drama around our stories. If we’ve assumed an identity in either direction (which most of us have), we find ourselves stuck at these poles and cannot find ourselves equilibrating in the center.

So my idea of the victim is that he or she is given the nascent invitation to learn the deeper power of surrender. The perpetrator is the one who is given the nascent invitation to learn how to heal others. One is reception, the other is agency—and both are simply young and undeveloped. Almost invariably, when I find myself wanting to book out of a place, it’s because some part of me is readying itself to go into climax. When we can reclaim the purity of the sensation we have experienced, we are on our way to ripening past the perceived trauma and into a much more profound and healing recognition of who we are and what we are meant for.

Section 13: Generative Coaching

In order to work with clients, you have to ensure that your own system is clean. Ultimately it will have to be strong enough to convey a full transmission of what's inside to what's out here. And it's really a choice: are you willing to let go of what you think is important to allow yourself to be used by god? When you are entombed in your head, there is nothing "good" in there. And even the best fantasy is not half as good as the bleakest reality. At least there is something palpable and nutritive in that reality.

The hardest part about being willing to say what you see is that if you are full of shit, you simply can't say it. You can't name what your client is doing as bad if you are doing something similar. We cannot be hypocrites in this work. As soon as we clean ourselves up, the power and the truth will flow through us. When we allow the rust to flow through the faucets long enough, pure water eventually comes out. We are clean and aligned, and the power comes rushing from us, irrevocably. And the most compassionate and instrumental thing we can do for our clients is to tell the truth.

If a client walks in and they seem to be working from an obvious script, I just start talking. And the client wonders why I'm saying these crazy, unintelligible things. I work with their mind the same way you work with a Zen koan. You keep the rational mind so occupied that the other mind, the intuitive mind that exists in the involuntary, can arise. It's the same thing you do with a mantra: you keep the part of the mind that wants to keep guard and have dominion occupied. Often, the other part will rise up with tears, because it is so relieved to finally come out. Sometimes it wells up with anger. But in this state, if you are daring enough to go there, you suddenly get to see a completely different face—the client's original face, which they don't normally present as. That's the only face you ever want to do a coaching session with, otherwise it's like trying to convince an alcoholic to stop drinking. If they ever come to you with that face, just sit and stare at them. This receptivity is a gateway. It's the same reason I won't stroke someone if they aren't getting off, because then you are simply reinforcing their not getting off.

If a client lays out their friction point, your job is to increase their friction point. If he says he's bored, that means he's actually numb. What you need to do is get this man into climax because there is such a build-up of residue that nothing is moving. And someone will almost always lay out for you what their friction points are, so you just need to intensify them. After all, your vacillation and uncertainty yield hellish results for your clients.

So what we have to figure out is why self-knowledge would appear dangerous to our clients. Most people have some idea that if they went deep inside, they would discover something terrible. So you can see as you get too close to an intensity level that your client has a way of avoiding it with sweetness. So my guess is that she uses sweetness to keep anyone from getting in there, but sweetness isn't what she really is. The thing she is

afraid of is that she's a fucking cunt, but because she keeps people out, she's probably just really lonely, and I'd be a cunt too if I was that lonely.

You can use your body as a gauge for what wants to come through as you work with a client. For instance, when I put my attention on her, my heart feels broken, my throat feels tight, my solar plexus is constricted. And I know this isn't me because I wasn't feeling this way a second ago, so I can sense that it might be her. And then as I look at her again, I see that she is still loving and trusting, which shows me how much she's been willing to withstand and how little she believes she deserves to be known. And then I begin to gauge what her receptivity capacity is. So in this way, you pay attention to how long someone can stay with a stroke. And what I'm sensing with my more resistant clients is that there is so much deflection that it is like arid soil, and not a lot will be able to penetrate.

When you see this in someone, there is no need to become frustrated; it's just that the arid soil hasn't been penetrated with a lot of love. She looks like someone who can take a lot, but don't be fooled; trust your feeling body, not looks alone. And if you trust your feeling body you will know you can't give her too much. As soon as someone's system locks to you, you're fucked, because you're perceived as an invader. So you have to continue to do what you do but in a covert way because direct is often too much for the system. That's what I do with the love, like the way you sneak the pill in between the peanut butter and jelly so they get what they need since they won't take it directly. To push them into it would look like coercion. You don't need to take the credit for their recovery; maintaining their trust and being a stand for their healing is far more important.

The thing to remember with coaching is that your consciousness, your problem-solving mind that you've been instructed to view as god, is built as a miser; that is, it's difficult to work with because it is reinforced in the culture—and not just reinforced, but exalted. You'll have to bend the paper back to recklessness, to terrible messes, and becoming prodigal by spending on stupid things. So if I were writing your prescription, I might consider turning you into a drug addict. And then you would simply listen to your addict. And then you can play all out, but at all costs, you stay receptive to your addict. Then I would write down a list of behaviors in others that disgust you. And one by one, that would become your bucket list. Because then you'll no longer be locked behind your own list of rules regarding what is needed in order for you to get love.

We are taking our clients out of learned helplessness and into true agency, which is a necessary side effect of adulthood. As Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron has said, "Theism is a deep-seated conviction that there's some hand to hold: if we just do the right things, someone will appreciate us and take care of us. It means thinking there's always a babysitter available when we need one. We are all inclined to abdicate our responsibilities and delegate our authority to something outside ourselves. Nontheism is relaxing with the ambiguity and uncertainty of the present moment without reaching for anything to protect ourselves. Nontheism is finally realizing that there's no babysitter

you can count on. You just get a good one, and then he or she is gone. Nontheism is realizing that it's not just babysitters that come and go. The whole of life is like that. This is the truth and the truth is inconvenient."

You can only wish for others what you wish for yourself. The things you have to do to keep yourself contained and locked down eventually hurt everyone around you—and don't ever fool yourself into believing everyone around you can't feel it. When one's tank is full, no matter what happens, one experiences it as pleasurable. But in most people's case, they only have a handful of circumstances they'll allow to bring them pleasure, so they waste all their fuel overworking those circumstances and bleeding them dry. They may try to get off really fucking hard and it becomes forced, and they haven't developed the capacity to get off on the other three-fourths of the world they've been neglecting. So the work is to learn to get off on the things you're averse to. When you liberate an aversion, that energy is no longer working against you—it's working for you, so liberating aversion adds an exponential benefit. Our preferences are repetitive devices that enslave us in eternal mediocrity but we are usually too chicken shit to step into a different terrain. Ultimately, what we're all learning to do—and what we are inculcating our clients to do—is get off on any stroke.

Here are some vital ideas to help you in your coaching practice.

1. Get clear on what coaching is for you.

- a. Your job is not to fix someone, but to push them to optimal limits. Your clients start from "good." Example: My mom would never give me money for basic needs, but would gift me luxury items. She knew I had to stand on my own and take care of myself first.
- b. Make sure your client knows they are responsible for basic self-management.
- c. Coaching will take them from being a child/passenger in an arena to an adult and hopefully to a parent, meaning mentor.
- d. Ultimately, a coach's job is to neutralize immune responses that have blocked a person's growth. It is a lot like walking through land mines. You know that you have hit an immune response when there is blame, disassociation, panic, and/or paranoia.
- e. If you speak one level above their awareness, the person doesn't hear you; two levels, they don't understand; three and they get angry; and four, they will kill you.
- f. We work in a particularly explosive arena, and for that reason, you will need particular skill. Essentially, you need to know how to cut the wires, and what to do if everything blows.

2. Maintain self-management.

- a. Self-management means that the person has burned off, by every means possible, all "charge" prior to meeting with you, otherwise it's like working with a sieve. Everything you do simply gets lost.

3. Know the places where you get “hexed.”

This may include the inability to respond to challenges from your clients, such as:

My sex life is already great.

I already give women lots of orgasm.

I have great orgasms (woman).

You’re a lot younger than I am; what type of experiences do you have that could benefit me?

Is this worth the money? I’ve sought a lot of self-help and therapy. How would this be any different?

I’m really comfortable with you, but I’m not comfortable with OneTaste.

I was sexually abused when I was younger.

I’m in an open relationship because my partner wants to and I want him/her to be happy.

Why is it so genital-focused? What about the heart?

You shouldn’t have to pay for personal growth.

My partner doesn’t agree with what you’ve been telling me.

I’ve asked for my desires but I never get them.

You’re not in a relationship, so why are you coaching about sex and relationships?

You’re terrible with women, so you shouldn’t be coaching about dating.

If you’re a turned-on woman, so why do you still play games?

Spiritual people shouldn’t charge money.

I just got herpes and I feel like my life is over. I shouldn’t have been reckless in having sex and I feel like I’m a disease.

In sex, I have a hard time telling my partner to stop when I’m done (woman).

I just want to please her (man).

I feel like I don’t have a voice.

It feels like he’s just stroking me to get me off.

What’s in it for the guy?

Is this a cult?

I was diagnosed with a disease and need to focus on my health.

I feel like I have to take a break and do some self-care.

Can’t I just do yoga instead of OM?

Why do you have to have a partner? Why can’t you stroke yourself? (woman)

I want to work on myself first before I get in a relationship.

I want to get a boy/girlfriend first before I start to OM.

Is OMing a gateway to polyamory?

It’s hard to find someone to stroke me (woman).

Why do you have to OM with so many partners?

My mom is terminally ill and I have to go back to Montana to take care of her so I can’t do this anymore.

What if you get emotionally attached to your OM partner?

I don’t feel safe.

Is there male stroking?

4. Know how to handle charge.

- a. Absorb: Take in as real, true, valid, and important the concerns of your client, but do this without closing terminal meaning. Don’t confirm that their feeling

- is right but that they are right human beings.
- b. Educate: Understand that they simply don't know a better way and offer your experience, power, and trust in what runs through them without being attached to the outcome.
 - c. Negotiate: Proactively ask for questions, and don't settle for agreement. Feel for their buy-in. Do they want to know more or go further? Communicate your experience, both from the point of view of the impact of what they said as well as why you do what you do. Ultimately they want to see if you will be taken hostage by their vigilance center the way they are.
 - d. Apologize, but do not commit fool's acquiescence.
 - e. Admit to the places where you also get hit around sex, OM, money, and relationships.
 - f. Understand that a hex is simply confirmation of self-doubt, and you go unconscious in the places where you are hexed.
 - g. See the challenge as an opportunity to be in your perfection; like Oprah said, if you pray for patience you get long lines.
 - h. Do not justify, do not say culture is "like this," and do not blame anyone else.
 - i. Be grateful, because the ultimate communication is that they want to be connected. Recognize that being here is hard and people take their viewpoints and stories very seriously.

What if, just what if, anyone could say anything to you and you could maintain center and not respond with fear or anger or blame or upset? What if we could allow people to be who they are and express what is inside without filters or a need for artificial safety? If we took on a practice of absorbing and converting whatever comes our way: good, bad, and ugly? And what if the best way to love each other is not merely compassion but a kind of ferocity? It's hard to learn to give the downstrokes, especially in this "sacred space" world where everyone is pretending to not have judgements or be fucked up. I think it would be pretty amazing if we could say anything to each other and learn how to "get off on any stroke" rather than attempt to create artificial safety that has us feel safe in the confines of that arena but doesn't prepare us for life. Nothing has been more useful for me as a teacher or someone who has a mission than to be able to take incredibly hard hits and love in response.

The hardest shit you have been through that you found power in is exactly the thing your client needs you to talk about, despite the fact that you may have ideas about your own invulnerability in the face of their issues. My newest client recently told me that he got herpes from his last girlfriend. He was sobbing as he told me this. He felt broken, unworthy, less than. Hopeless, even. The dissonance between the virus and the man was already clanging loudly and he wanted to be free so badly. And the herpes piece did not help him feel right. So I took a risk and got vulnerable. I told him, "I have herpes, too. And it's the best thing that ever happened to me." He looked at me, dumbfounded. This completely insane idea sat in the room like a fart. "What the fuck are you talking about?" So I did my best Jack Sparrow impression and told him where the buried treasure was: I used to be terrified of STDs. Petrified. And then when I got one, it took about two weeks

to flip. What happened was that I began to put myself out there and I immediately hit a streak of women who had it. I found out that women who like to fuck often do. That was awesome for me, because guess what? I just happened to like to fuck, too. I could smell the burning circuits. He texted me later on: "Can you run that piece about herpes by me again sometime soon, please?" It landed.

Ante up. Be the stronger limbic system and alchemize!

Examples of alchemizing charge from real situations

Comment:

Nicole ...I am also a bit of a romantic...and I suppose if a part of me gets honest, I am not sure I feel space for her when I OM, and that feels fracturing...any words on that?

Response:

I don't know about you but my OMs invite ALL of me out. Nothing wrong with romance—I love it!!! So long as it doesn't bully the rest of me out of the picture.

Comment:

What's the common etiquette on how long someone should make someone wait after offering an OM request? There is someone I asked. I know she's a busy one and likes to play but there has to be some line of respect and etiquette to the person asking. We should keep this community refined like Pimms and strawberries at Wimbledon, not like big hot dogs, dripping greasy fries, and beer at a Superbowl game.

Response:

Haha. The etiquette is for her to wait until she feels compelled to respond. This way, she is following the precise protocol of the orgasm.

Comment:

It's been very painful, and still is, for me to live this sense of injustice yet being pointed at by the vast majority as the one with issues and unjustly angry, who's living a false story. I think I'm right and I think you lot are wrong. The story is very real. Prostate cancer kills at the same rate as breast cancer, apparently. I want my cock stroked.

Response:

You keep coming back here because this is where the juice is. The juice is here because there are men who want it enough to stroke women to get it ignited. We don't care about reciprocity or symmetry as a stand-in for mutual gratification. We just want the orgasm. There are dozens of places you could go, modalities and techniques you could learn, groups you could join, etc., to get your cock stroked. Heck, you could easily hire a woman to do it. The reason you don't (or if you do, it's not gratifying) is probably because there's no orgasm there. But there's orgasm here. The reason there's orgasm here is because we're willing to stroke women without having them feel like they owe us something in return, and we're willing to enjoy it for its own sake. Like, genuinely enjoy it. Those are skills you'll

probably have to learn before you will have the combination of orgasm and anything having to do with stroking your cock that you seek. In the meantime, every time you post here, regardless of what the topic is, or whether you're complaining or whatever, you and I and everyone else knows that you're here because of the orgasm.

Comment:

OK, OM Hub. Here comes the all-time controversial subject. I'm not sure what I'm exuding lately, but in the last few days I have been presented with the same request by two of my regular OM partners. Male stroking. I didn't ask them, they asked me. And I said, hell yes! However, I want to be thoroughly educated and prepared for this. So, I've given myself at least a week to research the subject. Please advise me where to begin. I want to hear from those who have been trained, those who have stroked males and the males who have been stroked. I'm going to go through with this no matter what, but I want to be prepared in the best way possible. Thank you in advance.

Response:

Let's distinguish between a couple of different things. We've found that something happens to practitioners a few years into their practice where their relationship to their body, their sexuality, and the opposite sex gets fundamentally rewired. And their basic understanding of what "giving" and "receiving" even mean, in light of the experiences they've had in OM, gets fundamentally rewritten. It can't be transmitted or bypassed; it's an effect of the practice. These days we typically start the conversation about getting trained to switch roles after about three years of regular, consistent practice and about 600 OMs. There is a community of practitioners trained in Male OM. That said, among consenting adults, there's plenty of hands on penises. No surprise there and nothing wrong with it; we call it a hand job and we're all for them! We would recommend not using "OM" to describe it. Because, in the same way we want it to be that any two people across the world can say "Would you like to OM?" "Yes!" and know they're talking about the same thing, we'd like to make sure Male OM means two experienced practitioners trained in the switched roles. Does that make sense? There are a number of other safeguards in place that allow a clean Male OM practice to co-exist without jeopardizing the existing OM practice and everything that makes it valuable and safe.

Comment:

In my opinion, you can't buy this type of definition, and upon buying the definition (or course) then be indoctrinated into the upper tier of what is now a hierarchical group just because you paid \$495 or whatever the cost is. That...is bullshit and I think will cause problems for the business long term. If the hierarchy sticks and you push people into buying the product through the lack of their own self-worth or wanting to be called an "ignited man," it's not helping the business AT ALL.

Response:

I think in a protected or spiritual world, you want everything level and the same. You want it as a counterpoint to the production world, where hierarchy is rigid and a tool for separation. In an adult, connected, play world, you include all elements—but the difference

is, you let go of the results. It's not a matter of being great because the bar was lowered and we are "all great in god's eyes." It's that you used every means necessary to discover internal resources. Competition is healthy and hierarchy is real. The unhealthy part is when you make it mean something. I am often one of the better yogis in a room, and sometimes that just feels good because I can chart my progress. I want to keep reminding folks this is an adult game with real things that we rub up against—charged stuff like hierarchy and money and orgasm. And then we all get to see how we respond to those things and tweak accordingly. It feels like over half the posts say, "OneTaste is awesome and could be even better if we only kept the hippie spiritual side." We all get that the concept of OneTaste is about embracing all of it, right?

Comment:

I'm sure this is wonderful and appropriate for some people at some times; however, I have had the experience where my strokers have stroked so much for their own pleasure that I felt disconnected from the experience. From that place I have noticed myself feeling hyper-vigilant and skeptical, and even fearful and angry. I'm not saying that those things cannot be worked through, but I did want to mention the other side of the issue, at least from my perspective.

Response:

I see what you're saying. I think there's a myth that the stroker can like a stroke that the strokee doesn't, but this can only happen in disconnection. When you're connected, they're the same. So I'm not talking about choosing between his favorite stroke or hers. It's about how much he savors the experience, so much so that the strokee swings all the way from wondering if she owes him something to wondering if maybe he's actually getting the better end of the bargain.